

Code of Chivalry, as set down by King Arthur Penndragon, of the Knights of the Round Table, henceforth,... ..

Fairplay, as set forth in all our teachings, is as it never was before, and constitutes a level playing field, in the mind of the beholder of justice, and for to his level of understanding, he must administer what he believes to be fair. It vies for authority, unfair advantages can lead to disorder and unruly sentiment, and the attraction to positions of power for simply in and of the sake of themselves, so as to never wield such a station as to the cunning of battle, but as the merits in leadership expressed solely in the will and directive of a king all knowing and wise set for, and ever there was such a king, such would be an unruly day to find who could agree as to him and his leadership, henceforth, so as to ease settlement on the matter, kinship and friendship ceremonies are held in honor of fair play and knowing of different sports and valiant exercises... ..

Moreover thereon again, that this was never before known in all contempt, but that should one face an evil foe, no amount of cunning or trickery should be shed aside for in wielding any sword of truest justice, no such settlement could be reached in which Fair Play did not constitute discretion in outright murder and destruction of said evil doer, as ere reference in all codes of conduct henceforth, and that the truly noble are not born of ancient bloodlines, but of good and righteous spirits, in god, for love in happiness is their opinion, their rite of passage, and their way of love and romance to and fore in for adventure, thereon tu and without what constitutes a world they've worked for, one of Fair Play, for set in once they were before, for no such idiot wouldst set believe that fair play could constitute commission of sins and oppression against all who oppose him, and indeed that he wouldst oppose all, most readily, he is in all his designs one such evil as who would snuff out love and happiness for all, and live bereft of any sense of fairness, thereonfor and hencewith.

So no nobler mind must exist in what they sent forth, lest we have but for not in what rights we yet as of have for tu and on in for, this one such Code of Chivalry, henceforth...

Nobility, as set forth by all church and dogma, is a credo indistinct from lunacy, and shall henceforth be banished from the minds of the noble born soldiers of justice and fortitude that have joined me here, at the Round Table, so forth... ..

Living life as a nobleborn citizen would be as one who knew nothing of the world of romance and adventure, only in a nightmarish world plagued by indecision and belittlement foreon thereon and without for further more that this life and further course of unforeseen action could level a playing field, so to speak, in all exercise of Fair Play, as so it was and without should not be, the Noble born heirs to power are those who never had to seek it out, but who were in themselves great noble houses of power, and so from them spread the ageless paradigm of a house and family, and descendants of higher learning and practice, henceforth... ..

Broaden your life to what you could set in me for, that this one life was all they'd lived beyond our understanding of friendship and romance, hereon and forthwith, and so you should never have and need know about whether this or that wouldst not be here, nor there again before, because nothing ever said or done without the love of those who would see you through in kinship all and fore, is no live for done without loving lasted here and on innit fore...

Set in life, for thee, to know that for Nobility to exist in any life, henceforth, and for all time past, he or she would know and love and live in throngs of ancient tombs of none for what they'd lived and breathed in all existences was life and prosperity, facing no end to hardship for it seeks them out, and yet, here they stand loyal to the throne, only in itself was it ever valued as a gathering point and pivot line for friends and family, fighting for Noble throngs and Noble values, truest on and throughout, and so is set for courage, once more...

Valor, for sure as you have seen it, cannot be attained by the wicked, and we know its taste and odor well enough in spirit, we, of noble birth and standing, set in forth above, so not in what the past churches and ancient families rot have declared themselves overt with it.

Bravery lust for passion and ecstasy and living there and on throughout eternal salvation for life and honor should be to know and see before again, that valor was rampant in our lives, and is as ancient as all philosophy, for et on lie is kung fu au lu, bravery and justice, set for sure in this and one, for all our people have set in forth just what we were and are, so never before again did it need be known that this was brave or that was cowards, when smelled the scent of valor, we have, and known that in all things they live and breathe, they are not cowards, but may act cowardly, in the face of evil, and for sure must be as they are in all things they see and know as valorly, so forrit, because as each with all it does exhibit a glow of tendency and set on for of begotten ages and times, it is not in close to one or more the same color or hue and seam in all different things, so we must know that in loving our sisters and brothers for all they are and will ever become, so more, they know that we can see Valor in them, too, and trust them for it, and innit, thereon again, into the last of our lives... ..

Honor begets the mind of courtesy, and loyalty, but does not recline from its sanctity in spirit and recognition, forever on and into the next for sure, it is used as an unstoppable weapon, for to those unbound by mirth or love for life, honor is a

facsimile, and a bad one, too, and always is poorly copied, and so called honored, and we should laugh at this, for thenceforth to we who know honor in its truest intent, are unbarred by it, forever under, and they who seek to shield themselves innit, and bind you by it, are fools kept well in the prisons of the mind and body we have made for them, so sure... ..

As it stands to reason, there is little more and left I can teach you by it, but to know that in fair play and valor and reason and lack of power for power's sake alone for nothing innit but itself the motivation for what you live and breathe by, is your decree of honor, you know. Honor itself, coming from all things, well and good, so that this in life itself was never anything but a great and noble power that never itself had to stand against reason or time for on to know that we had never seen its liking before we came into it, set in more for love and happiness, that this in ever it was.. ..

Courtesy, for wanton lack of better valor, should know that without valor and decency, however uncommon your realm innit has become, so sure that this in level lack of understanding, I should know well enough not to bore you with a common lack of courtesy, in the length of this diorama, in its inability to entertain, forthwith, on the hells of honor's troubling messages and valor's truest practice in kung fu au lu, so long as though before, you should know that to be mindful of different forms of valor, thou shouldst know that courtesy is what we lack when we bare our teeth and believe only ourselves to be fighting the good fights, in all due haste, and should we wish to see it around us, for in truth we bare, life could not so more wanton itself as to display no end of those who would do well to have been told they are respected, what for... ..

This applies most necessarily and especially to women, what for, and to be sure enough that this could not be mistaken, I will grant you one forsaken truth in what courtesy could imply, more forth, in that women know well enough and good, in their valor, and their honor, that they can be and as are as they will be, so know in nothing that you could never know what strength would be accustomed to become, when well enough they have been so and forthely put by themselves upon the pedestals to be worshipped? Lacking for better knowing of it, we have never not wanted to crumble before a mother or a sister love, that this love and happiness we could not know is in their valor and strength and courage in all its forms, and so as to bestow an extra grant of courtesy to the ladies of noble birth or mind, set in for that life was always lived on in that should never forget to extend in different ways, and knowings forth, into the lives of children, and know that they could do well with your knowing of love and happiness, only granted that they not be treated as though cuteness were not a power they had honed finely, and wealth of laughter and smiles were not a power to be cherished and vied for, set for? That we would know courtesy is in your lack of understanding distinct details of another set forth in love and happiness, and so you know better to extend to them, the werewithall that they are cherished, and sought for, well enough in all the ways they are and will be, forever under and on...

Loyalty, as you know it well enough to warrant, is in the memory to ones own heart and lovings, for knowing that they could not ever know as you know, in the moment you know it, and so to show and stay true to what you are and know about them, in love, and set in for all you'd wanted to have in this, this life you'd lived and cherished well enough for forget the sentiment you'd longed for, and die by the blade of abandonment, when all others thought their work too important to beattle you with, henceforth, and you lay forgotten for timing did not match right, and your friends were not conveniently at your side, as before?

So in knowing all for the rest of this, you could never know what loyalty was unless you had it in you to forget the misunderstandings of kung fu au lu, of different walks of life in their quest for love and happiness ongoing, and forgive those whose walks of life differ so widely from your own, that even if to quarantine from one another, you must, you could know that in love, you both are fighting, so you know where all loyalties lie, should they surface again in your honor.. .. Knowing not what you are, and never could have been, should tell the surface of the owner that he need never believe in himself less or more than the first one he had come in for. Knowing all things as you have seen them, and never before witnessed in life or cherishment, should you ever or once see that this was life as sought by the once great and powerful, and yet in chains of honor, we bind the wicked, for honor's bane they truly are, and chains of apathy bind the rest of us, for set in love and life, that this was all our doing, moreover that you have become one of the knights of the Round Table, and if your deeds be known by some few or far between, you are not unrecognized in what you seek for, for none have ever grasped the wealth of knowing just how fast your brand of happiness and love can spread and always does, but the oldest ones I've yet to witness depart this world for lack of children to play with, henceforth, and know and love forever more again...

CHAPTER 1

So surely, Arthur was not about to murder his elder brother, Kay, because he was quite certain that his father Garrow would be less and more irritated with him, for murdering his only heir, apparently, and Arthur did not know why his father would have waited to tell him he was not in face, his own son, he could not guess, other than that the old bastard used to lord it over him, like Arthur belonged to him, only to disown him and admit never having been able to properly raise him, the minute it looked like Arthur might not have been the greatest swordsman who ever lived.

"You're not bad, they say..." declared Lancelot, circling the boy in the ring, sure he wouldn't have to bloody him up too much, sooner. "But then... they say a lot of things, don't they?"

"I can scarcely imagine!" he swung, and Lancelot parried, "what you have to say!" he slashed again, parried, "that this could witness!" parry, "for to and last and of it again, sir knight!"

"Knight?" he disarmed Arthur with a quick thrust and twist, then held the sword up to his throat. "Who told you I was a knight, boy?"

Arthur was not unimpressed, or unfrightened. "Your code alone, Sir Lancelot..."

"I harbor no code of conduct, boy," he flourished his sword away from Arthur's neck, what for, and sheathed it at his hip. "You are mistaken."

"Then what for did you spare my life, sir knight?"

"Less and so that you challenged me for sport, young brother. Why should I lay you out for it?"

"An honorable thing to do, and well coded, too."

He'd drawn his sword again, and had it back near Arthur's throat, though not so far, this time. "What say you of this *code*, boy?"

"Have one or not, and you're nothing but a liar, either way. All good men keep codes, and all good codes are waited to be read by others, still."

He lowered his sword again, and wondered at the younger boy. Lancelot was a teenager, still yet, but Arthur was his younger, by half past his teens, or so. "You're stranger and stranger, young brother. What is your name?"

"Arthur," he declared. "Who's to tell what you are, forrit?"

"I've never met a commoner so well spoken, Arthur. What are you?"

"Broken and cheated out of a rejected birthright, now..." he'd noticed for himself.

"That *was* your father, then? When I bested you, before? What an outrage..."

"Well be that as it may, you've not told me why you hid your apparent knighthood, sir."

"Sure enough you're blinded by reason, child. Look at what I am, a commoner! no less... No noble birth to choose from..."

"Noble enough for sure it is. Have you tried the sword in the stone?"

Lancelot was not unintrigued by the question, by now, nor would he have been, before. "What sword, in which stone?"

"You mean which sword in what stone?"

"Surely, of course, I misspoke." He didn't laugh.

"The king's sword, in the wizard's stone, of course. Have you heard true tell of it?"

"Most here in Albion have heard of the king's sword in the wizard's stone. Whose king though, some can ask?"

"Camelot, of course."

"I'm not familiar with the realm."

"You're in it now, sir knight. Camelot is all of Albion, and Redgemond, and Cliffhook, and for to be more and others who would bond together under any good king's rule."

"Magic has a petty price, for such foolery, you know..."

"So it has been said, but no such foolery exists, I know. I know an old wiseman, Merle, he's called, and he's said for long and hard that the one true king of Camelot will be the only son of Albion to pull the sword free from the stone, and soon, too."

"Soon, you say? And anyone can try and pull the sword from the stone? Of any birth or standing?"

"So they used to say."

"Used to? Why not so, any longer?"

"More or less, that a wicked lord holds Uther's citadel, now, and the sword is lost to any but his own retinue to try and rest it free."

"What of the wizard who cast the stone?"

"Gone and missing, till the true king rises, apparently. I had something of a thought, for you, sir..."

"What then, young brother? You've kept my interest far too long not to be able to ask something of me."

"Then what say you to finding other knights, like you and me, of apparent nobility and code, despite any petty lord's discretion, and move to seize the sword in the stone again, only to rest it ourselves, for having granted the one true king, wherever and whomever he may be, the perfect moment to join with us and declare a new order of knights, what for."

Lancelot was apparently less than thoroughly uninterested, thus far. He peered at Arthur, then, and asked, "This wise old man, you spake of, henceforth... why do you believe in him?"

"As for enough and good for well, he is a knight too, and the oldest that I know about. No king, he so claims, nor have I seen him for a solid season since, but I have trusted him and had my faith proven true, often."

"That is a cunning phrase, and were it not that I had lack of word for code, as you have called it, that I too witnessed in you, when you challenged, and more so when you fought, as you have, it wouldst not still mean nothing and yet here you have done for what you truly are. Fair enough be that as it may... How many, did you think, to gather to venture to a petty lord's domain?"

"Ten and twenty? Seven? Four? Less or more than have seen for to band together with us."

"And what of the others? The swords who vie for power, such as would love the chance at the king's private retinue."

"They would be their own undoing, Lancelot..."

"Sure enough they would, if a king among them, there was not."

"Sure enough and good, the sword has code, too. There for innit it is the king's sword, and none other. Penndragon's son, to hear some tell."

"Why would a wizard protect Penndragon's heir's birthright?"

"To rest him from his father, as a babe, they say, for safe keeping."

"And to rule as his father would never have allowed."

"For sure enough, you've figured the wizard's plot, I think."

"Well enough and good, I know the petty lord who holds the coliseum, and not the citadel."

"Coliseum?"

"Indeed. The greater citadel is well protected by Penndragon men and Penndragon sword, which is to say, all those still bound under the late king's true treaties, what for."

"So it is to say that no such greater force than a thousand might exist?"

"You ever *seen* a thousand swords before, younger brother?"

"Just so, I have counted them among crowfields."

"Scarcely less than enough to warrant my approval in your estimations. No more than four hundred swords would hold such a keep, safely so. Much less more than that, if sure they were of their standing, which they are not. Sixty men hold the coliseum."

"*Sixty?*" He couldn't believe their luck. "Well enough and good, Sir Lancelot, this is my fight to win as well as yours. Let us save the king and kingdom, what for..."

"Sure enough, King Arthur, I have never sworn my sword to service, before now..."

CHAPTER 2

Last and offrit in, this was the last Arthur was likely to ever see of the inside of his father's home, and he wasn't unglad of it, too.

"What's got you for all worked up innit?" asked Kay, crossing his arms when he entered and saw Arthur with his pack ready to depart, thusly.

"Want to come with me, brother?"

"For what and which beforrit, brother?"

"This time... it's short of words I'll be..."

"More time forrit, brother..."

"Then I've gone to join with Lancelot, to free the sword in the stone with a party of noble knights."

"Lancelot? The warrior who bested you? You convinced him to join with you?"

"Well enough, I did. We are joined in a common cause, and will both and all who gather with us for fairness and justice to obtain will try and rest the sword."

"And what of Merlin, then? Will you leave him out of it and me in, forrit?"

"Not so, but Merlin does not seek to rest the sword himself. He would join us as knights in court, of that I have no doubt."

"Knights in court? All of us?"

"Whoever should join us together, wouldst know doubt bestow nobility and knighthood upon his brothers, what for. Or you can try and kill him, if he does not."

"If it's not you or Lancelot, I've always been a fast traitor, anyhow."

"Fair enough, you have. I'll let Lancelot know of your faith in his leadership, brother. Come for, then?"

"Sure as soon as I gather my things and a sword. You can't barter one for me, can you?"

He shook his head. "Not this time. Find a sword and meet us on the eastern edge of town, what for."

"Will do then."

Arthur was about to leave, what for. "And Kay?"

"Yes, brother?"

"If it's bloodied, when you get to us, it'll be Lancelot who questions you forrit, alright? I'll have no say in the matter..."

Kay was level with him, for a moment, then said, "Sure enough and go, I can hardly not afford one, after all this time. Don't run into father on your way out of town, will you?"

"Don't lets," Arthur agreed, and departed his foster family's home, for the last time through.

CHAPTER 3

"Well enough and good that you recognize the need so well, King Arthur, I did not expect you to bring your own bastard brother along," said Lancelot, whilst Kay's figure traveling towards them was still a ways off and out of earshot, for sure.

"Wouldst thou cease calling me king till I have wrested thine sword from the wizard's stone?"

"Oh and who's this wizard, your old cousin Merle?"

"You're not supposed to know my secret conspiracy theories about my own birth, yet, so *no*, devil! I have yet to prove to myself forthwith that I could be anything other than a trusted knight to a good king."

"So the good king will say."

"*Not* in front of his idiot brother, thankee."

"Sure enough and well for good, Arthur, it's the same phrase as king for me, now."

"You're sure enough and loyal to a man you hardly know."

"Man yet? Surely a beard would do you justice, then. I had you pegged for half a boy still, yet."

"Half a boy or all of one, magic will wrest the sword from stone, so we'll wait and see if magic brings me a wholesome beard, what for."

Lancelot had a bold, awesome laugh, that Arthur very much liked listening to, and looked forward to watching Kay squirm when he heard it, as he'd seen him do for others, for some reason.

They were well met enough, for Lancelot was polite and Kay was of few words to him, at first, and would remain so until they had something well enough to bond over. Arthur figured them well enough a trio for camp to keep well watch, but Lancelot knew of an inn in the next town over they could reach before nightset, he claimed, so they headed that way, and Arthur asked him about fare, for the inns.

"No worries for that sort, young brother knight to be. I've coin enough for us three in short, for now, and this region's well to do to lock us up safe indoors before high moonrise, or lest we fall pray to night's watchmen, code bandits."

"*Code* bandits? As to they keep to the code of misery and torture for profit and surefire sinful gain?"

"Well enough and good, dear Arthur, what the hell have you been reading?"

"It's Merlin," said Kay, for him. "That mystic friend of his, always bandying about with different phrases. Can't say he was ever a poor storyteller, so more power to him, forrit?"

"I think that's the nicest thing you've ever said about Merlin in my company, Kay," said Arthur.

"Sure enough it was *not*," said Lancelot. "I've heard Kay say *lot's* of nice things about *lots* of okay people, right Kay?"

"I don't... uh..."

"He's only messing with you, brother, well enough to see if you'd be quick to claim the out, no matter the apparent misgivings, whatforrit."

"Sure enough you could out a ready idiot thusly," said Kay, thusly, "well done, forrit."

"Arthur you praise to colloquially. I was merely entertaining the philosophy that Kay may have at one point in time, alluded to a need for brotherhood at all times, in that we were brothers for starters and so I should mindlessly defend his misgivings, to any bitter or sweeter end, what for."

"That's madness itself," observed Kay.

"Hopefully, no one cursed Lancelot with a king for a father, what for," said Arthur, hurrying not to laugh, or show his grinning face, what for. Kay was woefully ignorant of the jest, as apparent.

The inn they stopped for was more or less the same as the others Arthur had never seen, he figured, which was strange, so he left it there as a memory he ought not judge by, and stayed the night in a cramped single room, with the three of them gathered together, and even Kay didn't complain, for being out of the night, so near the cities, proper.

It was before dawn when they rose to leave again, in the morrow, and little else was on their minds but to travel east, and stay far from anything interesting, moreover what for. Kay didn't seem to question where Arthur might have been planning to guide them, and indeed it was Lancelot who set the course, for present, but he, Arthur's foster brother, was used to Arthur knowing a great many things others did not, so it was easy enough not to worry, since he himself was a sworn sword and worried not forrit.

"Where did you come by that sword, brother?" asked Arthur, when they set out on the northern road, from the city itself.

"I killed a pig, forrit."

"Oh?" asked Lancelot. "Anyone I would know?"

"Doubtful. It was a literal pig, I slew. Sure enough I don't know what he was doing with a sword, forrit, nor why I really had to slay him just to take it, you know?"

"Your stories leave much to the imagination, governor," said Lancelot, what for.

"What's a governor? asked Kay.

"Well you might actually be one, one day, so I'll tell you," said Lancelot, "a governor is-

"Hold, Lancelot," said Arthur, quickly. "Bandits approach from the west, in form."

"Those aren't bandits, Arthur," said Kay, observing dully, "that looks like a band from Uther's old..." he realized what he was saying.

"Don't not run, boys!" cried Lancelot, and took off north, down the trail they were on.

"Hells above, Lancelot, I do love you well for your action, hence!" cried Arthur, stilling his sword and leaping over a log, to run beside his brothers plural.

They'd left the robbers behind, for sure, but breathless and outpaced, they did feel on the heels of their hurried expedition nothwards.

"Sure enough, I doubted we couldn't have killed the lot of them," said Kay.

"I've less a mind to try," said Lancelot. "One less in wounded and we'd be much sorer off than we are now."

"Lancelot's not wrong," said Arthur, "but I agree with Kay's sentiment." He didn't think Kay knew what sentiment meant, but the defiance was noted, thusly.

"Ever the diplomat, Arthur," said Lancelot.

"Do you two know each other?" asked Kay, "as in before this journey?"

"Sure enough, we do not," said Arthur, still catching his breath.

"If they gave chase they'll be upon us shortly," said Lancelot. "Let us be off."

"Or we could ambush them, and rid the world of some bandits, for a change," said Kay.

Lancelot bobbed his head a little. "I'm inclined to disagree, on this one. I've yet to see either of you two village boys in a real fight for your lives, and for murder, which it would be, so if you two challenge them, at this point, I'll run."

Arthur didn't think Lancelot meant that, so far as *he* was involved, but he wasn't going to say that in front of Kay, just then.

"I guess that's less than three knights then, right Arthur?"

Arthur raised an eyebrow at him. "If I do not live to see the end of this journey, with you at my side, Merle *will* haunt you, endlessly."

"Oh hell for pain, let's get moving then," said Kay, and hurried back off the trail they'd departed, some time before.

They didn't stop moving the whole evening through, well into nightfall, and Arthur was less than sure they shouldn't keep going, when Lancelot asked to scout ahead, for a campground clearing, in the forest they'd found themselves in. "I know these woods," he lied, "I won't be long."

"Sure enough," said Arthur, though he loathed that Lancelot made him say it, this early. Kay didn't seem to notice, though, that he was already deferring to Arthur, thankfully.

"There's witches in these woods," said Kay, from a log, where he and Arthur rested in the dark of the forest, awaiting Lancelot's return, henceforth.

"There's witches in every wood in Albion, so far as I know, Kay."

"Sure enough and hell to pay, there's whores and witches and trolls, in these woods. I didn't want to speak before, Arthur, when we were moving so swiftly, but I don't think this is a good place to camp, Arthur."

"No *this* isn't, but what makes you think Lancelot won't..." he stood, suddenly, and looked aft, to a glow, coming from over a tree covered rise. "What in name for sakes of..."

"Is it fairies, do you think?" asked Kay, watching the hill.

"Hopefully not," said Arthur, and he was moving as quickly and quietly toward the hill as he dared, and Kay was sure to follow, too.

"Is that a unicorn?" asked Kay, when they crawled up, on their abdomens, over the rise, to secretly see the source of the glow in the nightlight woods, therein.

"Not so..." Arthur whispered back. "It is... I do not know... Unicorns are not horses that glow, though..."

"It looks like a unicorn to me," said Kay, so Arthur flicked him in the center of the forehead and he said "ow!"

"Sh!!" shushed Arthur. "That's where your horn would be, if you were a unicorn. Besides, how do you know it isn't the lady that's glowing, and not the horse?"

"Because I don't even see a lady..." said Kay, looking harder, from Arthur, back to the glowing silver white horse, below.

Arthur saw one, and she was naked, too, save that her golden hair covered her nipples and most of her breasts. He was not unenthralled by her, but warned himself back from such a powerful enchantment as this. He did not know the look of fae, as yet, and he knew they were said to be beautiful, and enchanting... ..

"We don't know if she isn't fairy... If you're seeing a unicorn..."

"I *am* seeing a unicorn!" Kay hissed back at him.

"and I'm seeing a lady, then we must be both seeing an illusion."

"Can fairies really do such things?"

"So far as I can tell, yes."

"Is that Lancelot?"

"What, where?"

"There, down in the valley between those two hills."

"Hell below above," said Arthur, when he spotted him. He was stepping, boldly, out into the space of the glowing woman upon the horse, what for.

"What are you, beautiful creature?" he asked, and his thrumming voice carried far.

She looked to him, and hissed. Her face was twisted, when she did so, and the horse blared its defiance, at his arrival. She did not move to charge, however, and Arthur did not know why Lancelot had his sword drawn, before he'd even talked to her.

"I am called Lancelot," said Lancelot. "For what do you witness so, fair lady? You seem much troubled in this haunted wood."

She did not speak, or say, anything, but Lancelot did not falter, in his slow approach to her, hands disarming, though his sword stayed kept in his right hand. The horse cantered, and stepped away, a little, looking oddly at the approaching knight to be, what for.

"Lancelot!" Arthur could not help but cry out. "Come away from her!"

"Stay your voice and will, Arthur!" Lancelot cried back, unsure as of yet why he would not continue his saunter forward.

"What possesses you, man?!" Arthur did not wait to hear an answer, but charged down the hill, pulling free his sword and sure enough that he could die, forrit.

"Arthur, join me if you must but do not charge her!" cried Lancelot, and Arthur's step faltered, and he slowed, and approached Lancelot, from afar, and hoped Kay had not remembered to bring a boy, this suddenly.

"Kay! No bows!" he called back, behind them.

"Good call," observed Lancelot.

Up this close, with Lancelot, the gray lady looked very different; less radiant, and more sad, and the horse looked broken, and sad too. "What is... what *is* she?"

"A ghost, I think. Do you know me, lady?" he called to her.

"A ghost?" Arthur witnessed. "Madness itself, how can she be here, on that horse? Kay could see the horse alone, and named it unicorn."

"Speak not to me of... Kay could not see her?"

"No. I would know if he saw a naked woman, tonight."

"Naked, did you say?"

"Naked, yes. Why? Do you not..."

"No... I see a small girl, in a white and silver gown..."

"Hardly less terrifying, Lancelot. *Why* are we still advancing?"

"Because I think I know her name, Arthur. Lady Morgana?"

She witnessed him, really saw, him, both of them, for the first time, and the ghost transformed, and was a tall woman, naked yet, and by Lancelot's change in countenance, he saw her as such, too. The horse was gone, and she was in violet shadow and light and cloud, all. "*Help me*," she called to them through the aching void.

"Who is Morgana?" Arthur asked in a whisper, careful not to let his eyes leave the spectre before them both.

"The king to be's sleeping sister, Arthur."

"My *sister*?!" he hissed, without control.

"*YOUR sister*?" cried the covenant voices in the misty silhouette. "*Who... are you?*"

"My name is Arthur," said the boy.

"*Merlin's sword still rests in the stone, then?*"

"*Merlin's sword?*"

"*The wizard who cast the king's sword in the stone, in the citadel of Camelot, fool child.*"

"Yes, then. Merlin's sword waits to be wrested by the true king."

"*Then send him to me, in Castle Fairbanks, when he has declared himself king, and I will have much and more to offer him, if he makes haste for me.*" The image faded into the night, and darkness swallowed them.

"Who is Lady Morgana?" Arthur asked hurriedly, before Kay had a chance to join them.

"The late king's ward, and not his only prisoner at Castle Fairbanks, Arthur."

"How could she come here?"

"Magic, stupid. She is in a cursed sleep, still, awaiting rescue by her brother, the king."

"She say anything to you?" asked Kay, hurrying up to them. "Anything at all? I couldn't hear her."

"When did you see her?" asked Lancelot, for Arthur's benefit, who was dumbstruck, mostly.

"As soon as she transfigured herself from the form of the unicorn," said Kay.

"Delightful," said Lancelot. "And so the stories about magic live on."

CHAPTER 4

Far be it from him to play the chastened, but Arthur was more to most fed up with Kay and Lancelot both, the latter for his incessant need to woo Arthur's said elder foster brother, accordingly. He longed to find a new companion for their journey, and did not begrudge Lancelot his courage in befriending and loyalizing someone they had both come to dislike more and more often, in actuality.

"I have a friend near here," Lancelot was saying to Arthur, thusly. "It's why I brought us this far without reason."

"More be, tuit," said Kay. "What's his name for?"

They'd been travelling for weeks, but Lancelot was quick yet still to chastise Kay's dialect. "What's his name *for*? Well identification and glory, I'd wager. Something to cry out, too, when he's plowing fields to be sewn."

"I hear for that, well enough," said Kay.

"What's his name, Lancelot?" Arthur asked pointedly, feigning the irritated king, for Kay's coming bravery, innit, fortuit.

"Lancelot," said Kay, like he was going to tell him to tell Arthur off...

"Gawain," said Lancelot, "and he's right readier with a blade than either the two of you seem to be."

"I wasn't witnessing, or anything," said Arthur.

"Just so, Arthur. But when you move to make a daring rescue, albeit a timely interference, it serves you just so much better if I don't have to rescue you, forrit."

"I was there too," said Kay, pointedly, apparently.

"You'll kill us all, one day, I dare say," declared Lancelot thusly; "with your pointed observations, Kay."

"He's well enough a fool, forrit," said Kay, not sure what was being bandied about, most probably.

"That wasn't an insult, or anything," said Lancelot.

"Yeah Arthur it wa'nt, wait, what did you-"

"Gawain! Great of you to join us so soon!"

"Lancelot and company," said the easy striding ranger, approaching. "Have to be that you'd have my sentries in an uproar. Lancelot's come to challenge Gawain! they cried, Sure enough he'll kill you this time, sire!"

"Sire?" asked Arthur. "You're a king, then?"

Gawain pointed at Arthur, glanced at him, and looked to Lancelot, still pointing at Arthur, "Who's this?"

"A friend of mine, who doesn't know how many ill afforded fathers let their children call them father. Arthur, Kay, meet Gawain. Gawain, Arthur, and his idiot brother Kay."

"Whatsit?" objected Kay, vehemently.

"You *children* call you sire?" asked Arthur.

"Ever the diplomatic envoy, Lancelot. You lies will start wars one day, I think," said Gawain to Lancelot, still mostly ignoring Arthur, like he was a child.

"Lies do not become us, Gawain!" Lancelot clapped the ranger on the shoulders. "I'm pretty sure that's a real saying, too."

Gawain was preparing his introduction when he said, "Yeah it's a saying, alright. And you botched it." He turned to Arthur. "Lancelot's right hand, by now? Sure thing, Arthur, my name's Gawain, and nobody calls me sire, any longer. Lancelot's just ruined that one, for my friends and idiot brothers." He shook his hand, thusly.

Arthur liked the look and make of him, to be sure. "Well met, Gawain. Why is it they called you sire, in the first place?"

Lancelot began; "He's a-"

"Bandit's son, actually. A bandit king, some declared. Some, meaning my friends who like the scare bandit prince reputation."

"Bandits for name, knights for codec," said Arthur, for surely he did not lie, forrit. "I have seen you like before, I think."

"Oh have you now? What's a knight in codec, Sir Arthur?"

"Sir's not by me, till I serve a king, I think," corrected Arthur, "as we mean to do. We've set to gather enough friends to take the coliseum, from the petty lord's grasp."

Gawain had crossed his arms, by then. "That *petty* lord is a dangerous foe, to hear the tell of it."

"You know his name, then? Lancelot refuses to divulge."

He looked from Lancelot, to Arthur, back again and to again. "Where," he changed to Arthur, "have you been getting your information, then?"

"Title it a phony beginning," said Lancelot, as though that were the small and little of it.

"Shut up, waywarder," said Gawain, and he referenced Arthur's countenance, again, what for.

"An old friend of mine, Merlin, told me stories, growing up. He told me last May of the treasenous grab, at the citadel."

"*Tresenous* grab?" asked Gawain. His accent was pleasant enough that Arthur didn't mind the tone, what for. "You believe in the prophecies concerning the one true king, then?"

"Sure enough I could not if I did not be here, so for..." said Arthur, like it was obvious.

Gawain laughed, and looked to Lancelot. "A wayworder, too, I see?"

"Sure enough he knows his penmanship."

"That's not untrue," said Arthur, not knowing the reference, if there was one. "Merlin taught me to read and write."

"He did not," argued Kay.

"Fool enough for you to know the difference," argued his brother Arthur.

"You're Kay?" asked Gawain.

"Sure enough, well met..."

"Shut up, Kay," said Gawain, and turned back to face Arthur, again. "You're more or less a savior to most folks what wanted that power for themselves, you know."

"How so?" Arthur did not understand the phrasing, what for.

"How so, or why for?"

"Get your message on withit. You're holding something, Gawain," said Arthur, surely.

"Just so," Gawain witnessed. "Well enough and good, I've got a sword and a steady shield I pretend at, sometimes, just for fun. Wouldst thou merry trio have me in a quartet?"

"What's a quartet?" asked Kay.

"Three more than in a mono," said Lancelot.

"Sure enough that's ill to witness poorly," said Arthur, what for. "I couldn't ask for a better ranger to partake with our bread and kinship than a bandit prince, for sure and lo, eh said Lancelot?"

"For and with, I do not fancy him a prince, by any meager standing."

"Sure enough and good, jackasses, I'm coming with you, or it's my sentries you'll be answering to."

"The running, panicking sentries?" asked Lancelot.

"The very same. They're well enough not to know not to follow me unless we run forrit, though."

"Sure enough for, set, go!" cried Lancelot, and took off faster than and ahead of Gawain and Arthur, with Kay late to come to it.

Sure enough and well, Arthur hadn't had much for time to gage what else Gawain knew of Lancelot's intentions and background, beyond that he trusted the two of them easier well enough right away than he'd ever trusted anyone but Merle, least of all his foster brother Kay.

Set in for that it was lasted again, Gawain did not tire, nor did Lancelot, and it was not Arthur but Kay who cried for them to slow, and Gawain harangued him for it, and called him a crying babe, well and good.

"For who to shame let's a baby cry?" asked Arthur, sincerely not knowing the reference, what for.

"How now, gov'ner?" asked Gawain, curiously as ever.

"Babies don't cry unless something's wrong. What is a crybaby?"

"You ever met a child who didn't stop crying out, even though he should have been satisfied, just because he knows everyone hates not to serve a crying baby, what for?"

Gawain was not unintelligent, though he was well remarked that Kay was not to be friend to all, well enough, and Arthur loved him for it, and Lancelot more so, for the two of them playing him back and forth, so well. Kay had had to dwell on the decent memory of his kinship with Lancelot, however, as they came into more intelligent company, what for, and a better counter to Arthur's boyish build than the stout and ignorant Kay.

"Not so," said Arthur, "but when I say baby, or child, I have never meant a creature of myth or illusion."

"The myth is that they are really children," Lancelot agreed, what for.

"True enough and said, Lancelot," said Gawain. "Obvious isn't your strong suit, ezet?"

"Fair for pleasure, boys," said Arthur, "we have company most foul."

"Ho! For shame and hollow!" cried one of the approaching wayparty. "Is that Lancelot I witness, here?"

"No for!" affirmed Arthur, none forrit. "Who are you, and how dare you hail to the king so boldly?" The party cantered, and stopped. Kay actually kept his mouth shut, and Gawain and Lancelot did... also...

"What king, boy?" demanded the first that had hailed.

"My king!" declared Arthur. "Who and what for, do you dare, cur? I demand for penance and purpose! Sell me your swords!"

"Hell for what do you say, boy?!" the anger wrested from the man's chest, what for.

"Broken servants aren't hard to come by, if you force my hand," said Arthur. "Well enough and good, forrit, I scarcely need your filthy horses announcing our presence to every bandit party we cross near with their odor. Do away with them, thusly, and do not delay me orders further."

The lead man dismounted, in a hurry, wresting his sword free of its scabbard, closing fast the distance. "How *dare* your insolence exist in *my* do-"

"Lancelot," Arthur said rather quickly.

"Just so," Lancelot caught right on, stepped forward, disarmed the bastard with a quick twist and slap of his sword, and held the point to the aggressor's throat. "Would be, Arthur, good form. I'd have never have gotten him off that horse."

"How... how d-... how" the animal was stammering.

"How dare I?" asked Lancelot. "Is that what you stutter for me? Pleasant well enough; I know who you are."

"Dismount and disarm, if thou wouldst not see thine lord in scarlet, on this roadside domain," ordered King Arthur, the just.

"For fools and sure enough delay, do as he commands, now!" cried the scarlet dripping lord.

As the enemies dismounted, and cast away their arms, Gawain moved to collect their swords, what for. Kay assisted, readily, and without command, and Arthur deemed this a poor time to balk, or falter. "Lancelot," Arthur said when Gawain had returned with all the weapons apparent there. "Kill him. Kill them all."

CHAPTER 5

Percival had not joined them well enough until they were richer ten good warhorses and a fair set of arms and currency, three days henceforth. Liken it or not to a bad case of misdirection they were surely more lost than Arthur could figure a ranger like Gawain was sure to be capable of getting, and he was more suspicious, forrit.

Hence and more forth, Kay was ornery, which meant next to nothing to Arthur, what with three others for company and lack of well afford to a crybaby's temper, what for.

Next to that, though, Arthur doubted if they were better off for letting Kay watch the horses like they had, just then, and he'd ordered Percival to double back and keep spy, who'd laughed at the order, hastily given, and told Arthur to practice his stonebreaking, henceforth.

"Not sure enough to be rude," said Lancelot thusly, "but what sort of qualms do you have about leaving one ill afforded man to guard ten kingly horses, what for?"

"Sure enough and well, there's the rub."

"Richer off still we would be without Kay's insolence, even short our nefariously obtained plunder, Arthur," said Percival.

"Insolence, what have you?" Arthur wondered at him.

"Pure enough and good for reason," said Percival, back at him. He seemed even more at home in a closed in city such as this than Lancelot or Gawain either. "He's well enough not your brother if he can't carry out a simple hide and lookout task, now is he?"

"Sure enough, I have poor use for brothers who sell horses they're already in richer essence of, so say the least of which he'd have no mind of where to spend his winnings."

"Basically enough, Arthur," said Lancelot, "not one of our number would be less glad of our surer journey if we are short a traitor, and wouldst he not be one, we'd still have left one *trusted* man among ten horses, anyways."

"It stands to reason," said Arthur thusly, "that you're as sharp as needed, when it comes to my brother, already. The lot of you seem to be, quite honestly, so well afforded that, and thanks."

"Sure enough a kingly apology," said Percival. "He does not protest well enough, I think."

"Surely you meant to stammer and disregard reason, what for?" suggested Gawain, accordingly. "You are a king, no less?"

"Sure enough you're mad, all of you. If it's *agreed* upon that you've chosen me among you to draw last, then let Kay know and be *done* about it, but if we-

"Draw last, Arthur?" said Gawain, to interrupt him.

He looked at him, sure. "Yes, last, of course."

"Why not f-" Lancelot began to ask, then realized it and said, "For and well enough, yes, that's clever for you, Percival."

"Much faith in the wizard's say, have you?" asked Gawain, accordingly.

"So much so that I'm quite sure that was the *point* of this whole quest we're on, no?"

"Quest?" objected Percival, thusly. "Who put us on a quest? Hell for spectres, are you serious? I didn't want to join a *ques!* I just thought we were going to kill some people ad seize some land!... righteously, o'course!" He pumped his fist for the end of it, then Lancelot went to him and whispered something in his ear, and Percival stated, "ah, that makes a lot more sense then. Questing it is!"

Lancelot stopped short, all of the sudden. "Ahw, fuck, pig in shit and hell for baskets fucked in piggish shit filth fucking fuck for hell and shit, fucks! Arthur,..."

"Don't, tag my name to the end of that, sir..."

"Arthur how desperate are... oh, hell, Bors! Bors of hells and rains below above, how are you, old card!"

"By saints for married!" bowled Bors. "Who the 'ell are you?"

"Auhw fuck, pig, shit..." said Arhur, when he saw the source of the address to Bors.

It was a hog of a man, well steeped in resin for what ends to what means, none should have guessed at, and still retarded enough for less is more in ways of armored body parts that fit his boarish body, and henceforth Arthur swore he'd leave his pigs alone to dress themselves in mud, forever more, and so save the world from their bulging ceps, what forth, coming forth from the armor they'd been requisitioned in, apparently, at what, nine?

"Forth in hells below," said Gawain accordingly, "you are a slob of manhood, aren't you?"

"Whatchin' forrit, lover boy?" Bors drew a longknife, and flashed it before Gawain, who slapped it aside and clouted Bors in the nose, hard, with the same elbow.

"Now what for, Gawain," chided Lancelot, and Bors only stumbled back a step and shook his head, for stumbling to clear it, what for, "he's less and sure that wasn't an insult, right Bors the younger?"

"Hell in whatforrit again, what did you call me?" demanded Bors, in a different sort of tone.

"Yes *what* did you call him?" asked Gawain, again.

"Who's to say I didn't warn you, eh Percival? This is my old nemesis, Bors the younger."

"Only bloke who's ever called me that slew my older brother. Ain't you that slimy kid what got all wise and weary

wit' his father's sword, what for?"

"The very same," said Lancelot.

"Hell in ferts above!" he cried, and slapped Lancelot's shoulder. "You *are* a card, aren't you?"

"To use the word..." Arthur had begun, when Percival's daring look sated his cadence.

"To hell with usin' it," said Kay, "what the hell's a card?"

"An idiot," said Gawain to Kay, quite readily. "Lancelot you're fit for madness. We can't hire this layabout thug. Not for King Arthur's retinue, no way."

"Who's a layabout thug?" thug demanded. "Hangon... who'n the hell is King Arthur?"

"I'm the thug," said the king, "well enough and good, I'm not actually looking to be hired, Gawain."

"He's the king, idiot," said Gawain, watching Bors the younger's bewildered expression. "Bors the layabout thug, this is the once and future king, his Majesty Arthur Penndragon. Don't bow, or I'll cut you, forrit."

The name Penndragon, and the repeated titles what forrit, had drawn a few wary eyes, who turned way at the sight of Bors, what for, most ways, anyways.

"You're the king, whatforrit?" Bors asked of Arthur, grossly.

"Back up or I'll have you flogged, cur," he said to him, and Lancelot clapped Bors the younger's shoulder, pressing him back a step, thusly.

"Sure enough 'e sounds like a king. What'chyou wan' hire me for?" asked Bors, looking then to Lancelot, Gawain, and back at Arthur, henceforth.

"We're not," said Gawain, surely, what for.

"He's wicked fast with a knife," corrected Lancelot, "and his mace will crush things quite readily. Spikey, too." He gestured and grimaced, what for.

"Nah I ain't got a mace, no more," said Bors. "Lookin' to buy one, matter o'fact, jack. What'chyou payin' for, anyways, majesty?"

"A mace, a horse," Arthur reasoned, "and a knighthood, henceforth, if you survive." Lancelot looked as though that were doubtful.

"What kinda horse?" he reasoned aloud, like that was what mattered.

"A warhorse," said Arthur surely.

"For sure an' well enough an' good! Sounds like a might met match, majesty!" He held his hand out, and Arthur didn't hesitate to grasp it, to affirm the bargain, and show respect for valor unhad, most apparent.

"Well enough and good," said Lancelot, "I'll take Bors the younger to buy his mace, what for, and you lot can meet us with the retinue, post haste afterwards," he suggested.

"Take Gawain with you," said Arthur, then added, "that isn't up for discussion."

"By your leave then, sire," said Gawain, and bowed, slightly, attracting far more attention than before. The three of them sauntered off, at Bors the younger's pace, what for, and Percival fell into step with Arthur, toward another quarter of the city, what for.

"I love you well for sending the both of them," said Percival to him. "Hate to have Bors get Lancelot killed in a brawl, what for."

"Sure enough and good," he said, "where did you think we needed to obtain information from, Percival?"

"An information *broker*, actually. Well enough and good that we did not name the retinue's numbers, said for, what say?"

"Do you need to witness aloud every clever thing we do *without* having to talk about it beforehand, afterward?"

"Sure enough, that's a smart clever way to put it, sire."

"Bite your tongue, cur," Arthur wanted to laugh. "What's the broker's language?"

Percival looked at him sideways, as they climbed the steps, what for. "Quick study, you seem to be..." Arthur let him pause in silence. "I mean to kill him, is all, what for."

Arthur didn't think that wasn't a better thing for two over three, Gawain included. "What for?"

"Running girls," he answered, like it was pain enough for anyone to know about.

"Who is he to you?" asked Arthur.

"My brother," Percival swung open the door, and they entered the office foyer, what for.

CHAPTER 6

Bringing up for what he was, Arthur was afraid for his own sanctity of thought, unculled for unbridled rage, in the presence of Percival's set to be late brother, Gremnor, aptly named for a filthy cur, that he was.

"Save innit forrit again, sir," said Arthur, thusly, "you are must unkind to my servants." Percival stilled, what for...

"Hells to what you've witnessed," declared Gremnor, "what did you say?"

"Did you think I would not come to claim my house and holdings, Gremnor? Sycophant."

Percival's breath was paced, measured, strong...

"How now, Percival? What for sodomy is this, I dare say?"

"*You* would speak of sodomy?" Arthur was furious. "Hells to brains spattered beyond your threshold, still! I will gut you myself, animal!" Arthur's sword bared flesh, high being drawn from its scabbard, thusly, and Percival pace between heartbeats, knife out, cunning leashed, cut for, lasting without, and he darted across the distance, before Arthur could leash free his would be cutlass, and gouged his brother's throat open, with a venom enlaced knife, that burbled and spat from the wound as blood and forth gushed forth, frommit.

Arthur's sword met the first ready spearguard's helmet sidelong, and cleaved through the metal, scattering blood across a spray zone, set apart and for the rest that he cleaved it back to his ready, kicked aside, another spear for him, and ran through the second guard with his freshly cleaved sword, what for.

Percival grabbed his shoulder, as he flashed past to depart, an Arthur left with him on haste, as the second dead guardsman fell on. "Seize!" screamed voices from behind them as they fled the estate. "Seize them now! Kill them both!"

"Kill the wretch for starters, Arthur!" cried Percival, then leaping into the air, whooping wildly in celebration for their assassination.

"Well and good that we could not do more..." Arthur witnessed, painfully.

"Well enough and good forrit, Arthur, less is more for what we've done here. My dead brother's retinue was well chastened to serve, and hate him well, they should. He'll ne'er survive that blow, I promise you on my honor."

They were still running at full measure, and didn't slow down, either. "See that you can be less discreet around more savory fellows of our kin and clan."

"*Your* kin and clan maybe, but I... Oooh, I see where you were going with that. Well for, King."

More or less they did not slow in their departure for a coin righteous town guard, or what and not, and Kay was less chagrined than he seemed, apparently, for lack of security gone away, in Bors the younger's company, for in less he'd felt the odd man out, and was for in here more less it so.

"Ten horses, and five company?" Bors was bawding about. "Howzit for you could say you were really a king's retinue, Lancelot? Eh, Arthur?"

"Last doubt, cur!" Gawain called over the sound of running horses, what for.

"We came by the horses by chance, and are richer forrit!" Lancelot declared over hoofbeats. "It's well enough our party comes as it goes for, Bors, old card!"

"I thought *he* said that card means-

"Set for, Bors!" cried Lancelot over the thunder, "I can't still hear you!" The rain set in, then, and poured them out of a sure gallop, on roads well slopped with mud, by then.

"Arthur!" cried Gawain over the storm, when they'd stopped by the roadside, to coralle and slow the other horses, what for. "Keeping well enough alone! We need to be short of these horses, and soon! I meant to say something earlier, but we're too near the citadel to be drawing this much attention!"

"One more horse then, we'll keep!" Arthur declared, forrit. "For Merlin, in case he joins us before the end!"

"Merlin?!" cried Bors the younger, indignantly. "The end of what?!"

"Your life, fatstop," said Lancelot, and Arthur could only read his lips, when he said it, but Bors heard or saw nothing of it.

"Merlin can bring his own horse," said Gawain, "but one extra horse is wise enough for my liking!" He tied one of the horses to his Arthur's saddle, then made to scatter the others, before they departed the roadside, what for.

"They'll die on their own in the storm!" Arthur objected. He was less more the lordling boy Bors the younger thought he should be, what for.

"*War* horses, Arthur!" corrected Gawain, what for. "They'll be fine! I promise you!"

"Wait a ticket!" cried Bors. "If you're givin' away horses then I want one more, what for! I'll tie it off myself, and you can't stop me!"

Arthur shook his head not to worry about it when Gawain gestured that he might intervene on his behalf.

"Hyaaa!" cried Gawain, and then Lancelot after him; "Hyaaa!"

They moved swiftly enough, getting the horses out and about away from them and the road, in the storm, and letting them graze off in the countryside, or more or less seek shelter from the storm in some treecover, somewhere off far enough not to see in the gray downpour.

"This is madness itself!" cried Arthur, as they started full gait back up the road, toward whatever destination they could muster, for.

"We're days away from anything good, what for!" declared Bors.

"He's not wrong about that!" agreed Percival, thusly.

"Let's run, then!" said Arthur, and he knew the horses well enough by now, what for. Lancelot wordlessly took the reins of the other horse from Arthur and gave them over to Gawain, and the five of them set for to run their horses forward, to ride out the storm and find possible shelter, off the roadside, what for.

It was ages before the horses began to feel unsteady in how much longer this was going to take, and with a signal from Gawain, Arthur ordered them all to slow, and he was sure enough sick and wet, already, but a curious feeling was overcoming him, and the banter between some of the others didn't cross well for him to hear until Lancelot barked his name, once more. "Arthur!" he cried.

He snapped out of his seeming trance, and looked at them. The rain was light and pattering, by now, and the atmosphere was clearer, to be sure. "What is it?"

"You look far too well for witnessing of Bors' good manner," said Lancelot, thusly. "What's innit for, to hear some say?"

"Someone's coming for me," he said, as though it were easy to know, and believe in. "Someone knows my name, I think."

"What name, Arthur?" asked Gawain. Kay had learned well enough to shut up about it, what for.

For hell in what they were about to witness, Arthur could not be sure. In that he could never again see life here in this same way, he witnessed what had occurred. Both Gawain and Lancelot could see and know evil well enough to bandy it about them, for just desserts at proper intervals, and this was sure or more or less par course for Percival's unfaltering sense of justice, and yet... they called him Arthur, well enough for any to witness, and meant King, when they said it, already. "We'll have seven seats, I think."

"Who for?" asked Percival, leaning on his saddle mount. They'd gathered roadside, again, clustered for Arthur's unwitting lack of attention, there before.

"Me for," he answered. "I said seven, I meant eight. Or for nine, we'd need. Ten, if there are any to be had, in the realm. Eleven for starters to boot it all asunder, for."

"Twelve, I dare say, if we are lucky enough to afford the number," said Lancelot.

"For to sure, we'd have thirteen or fourteen, to count us luckier, what forrit," said Percival, "so what forrit, Arthur? Sire, I mean?"

"For sure in it wealth enough, Percival. I mean to say that knighthood is well enough left alone, for now, but that eleven seats and counting number those who will come to join us, at the table, 'round."

"For sure in what you speaketh, King," said Percival, thusly. "Come forrit again?"

"A round table of knights?" asked Lancelot. "I'd like you well enough forrit, Arthur, that I would."

"So for what do you mean, Arthur?" asked Gawain, and Kay was curious enough to witness, too.

"Set for, in what order do knights stand to reason with one another?"

"None," set Gawain, "more that they pull rank for no other reason than to forget reason existed, what for..." he looked to be realizing.

"Exactly as I've always heard must be done," said Arthur, "and mockingly, too. This is ill afforded a venture, and we shall set out from this roadside presently," he moved his horse, forward, "but to know of what I think, now, thou wouldst know that I seek an even table, no seat above the other."

"Set in for but one, good sir," noted Percival.

For in what he could not fathom why, but Arthur caught Percival's gaze, then nodded, forrit, silently. "Sure enough and well," he said thereafter, "that each knight who sits at it stands equal in reason to the rest."

"That sounds reasonably unequal," said Lancelot.

"For tu, what do you mean, sire?" asked Gawain.

"I don't even have a beard yet, mongrel, quit your blubbering," said Arthur, and Gawain laughed, outright. "I mean that follow my intent without the words lining up, what for, good sirs."

"I hear your cause," said Lancelot, serious enough well forrit. "A table of knights of equal station, in standing amongst the group, forever more indebted only to reason for their say at supper, or breakfast."

"Or luncheon..." said Percival, like he was just getting the picture, "or perhaps even tea!"

"Astounding, yes?" noted Gawain. "You set to break the classes of knighthood? Well afforded, Arthur, you will do well to fight as a truer card than they, I'd say."

"The high seat is not for me," he clarified.

"Oh no?" asked Gawain, and looked at Percival, oddly.

"He's chosen by God," said Percival, and Arthur's stomach lurched, forrit. "His name is Sir Galahad; he is far greater a man than any of us could dare reckon for, save for the High King, Arthur."

"So for it has been said," said Lancelot, clearing his throat of bile, what for. "Sir Galahad, you say?" Arthur was contemptuous, forrit all.

"What the hell is God choosing you knights for?" asked Bors, bewildered. "Seems a might unfair, innit?"

"Who do you think chose the *king*, ignoramus?" Lancelot balked. Arthur didn't like what god meant, in this

context. Not one bit...

“Who’sit... whatfor? What’chyoun sayin’, Lancelot? Gawain, innit? What’chyoun sayin’ for? What’s goin’ on?”

He’d left himself there, what for, because the discussion on the knights of his rounded table was well understood, for the truest knights gathered, and he was well disgusted for what he would have to witness, what forrit. What manner of creature would Gawain bereft this table’s sanctity, only to lure?

Sir Galahad. The name now terrified, Arthur Penndragon, for all he was worth as a king.

CHAPTER 7

For be it again, Arthur could not live to tell himself not to kill Gawain and Lancelot both, for their strutting about in heiatous, laughing it up for all the world to come in awe, set in for that they were naked, and couldn't stop Arthur laughing just about every time they made a ridiculous turnabout or gesture, mocking lordlings at the riverside, and he was well enough forrit that Bors had taken to himself down the creek and was bathing, for thank heavens, and Kay waded out into the water, changing about and watching the antics well enough on occasion, whilst Percival was out for whatever he'd needed to obtain, said for... ..

"This is loe and well enough and good, sirs, but lie about all you will, I think we've had less bathing than I was witnessed for."

"Suit yourself, for bawdy clothed king," said Gawain.

"Exit for, last in what you are to me, again."

"Moreover in that you were, King!" said Lancelot. And witnessed, for lied innit, and fled to story for diving into the water e'er he waded far 'nough intoit.

"So for more in lies?" asked Gawain, laughing about Arthur's shirt catching as he readied to bathe in the river, henceforth. "So more in for innit with the king, you know."

"Tell it once to me and I'll ne'er believe you again, Sir Gawain."

"Why do you only call me Sir Gawain when we're alone together, king card?"

"Well enough in what you were, dignitary. Shouldn't I have to stay myself from bandying the name about before its warranted for the others?"

"Hate them so much you do?"

"Well enough," he was less than nude, for what it was, but liked talking to Gawain, set enough forrit. "I'm dead if not abandoned by fantasies and delusions of romantic valor and post haste in kinship to right the usurpers' wrong, so forth."

"We have ridden well in kinship, lord king, and look on well enough for the rest, it was easy enough to afford that we would well equip ourselves in evil to vanquish it at need be interludes, for that we could wrest it from the grasp of other evils and pollute its ill designs, henceforth."

"Good enough to hear you say it, thusly, aloud, you know..."

"Fair enough for all we're worth. How now for kinship in poor company with thine foster brother, nor Merlin, instead?"

"Merlin's my best friend, and often enough my cunning adversary." He wanted to smile, forrit.

"Sure enough he is not," said Gawain. "You're half more clothéd still, and I've much delayed your bathing henceforth again."

He smiled, still brighter. "Much more that I could have it for a rainy day, still again." He took for the rest of his clothing off.

"Set in what again, high king? What say you to rainy days' afford?"

"Set moreover for innit again, I've lost myself for often enough in the rain, wherever I am. I should hope to swim downriver and lose myself in the water as though it's in rain." He was naked, now, and hurried into the water, then, diving below, then swimming himself out, into a current.

CHAPTER 8

Blast in forrit again, Arthur couldn't see straight, and his leg felt broken, under the wagon, but he was sure that he just had to keep digging out from under it, to relieve the pressure, onnit... ..

He couldn't focus, though, Lancelot was fighting four or ten more bandits, what for, and Arthur didn't know from whence they'd even have come, and Gawain and Percival had long since moved on, and he couldn't fathom what had become of the others.

Are we alone? Am I set to watch Lancelot die before me, only to bleed out myself when they find me and slit my throat, what for? He'd been sure nothing was going to come to this, and yet, somehow in what he was, for an ending, he could not help but wonder at what he'd done, for to deserve this, after all Merlin had prepared him for.

"Merlin," he called, facedown in the dirt and pouring rain. "Merlin, I need you!" He couldn't believe how hard it was to breathe, just then. "Merlin!" He paused, waited, breathed. "This is what I'm doing, for this! I can't believe in myself enough to stop what's happening now! Please, Merlin!"

The name was fleeting, and he didn't know it's color. "Emris," he said below his breathe, and the wood stilled, from afar. "Merlin!" he cried out from beneath the torrent of rain. "Save Lancelot!" and a torrent of fire erupted from the woods.

Arthur howled, screaming for sanctity, howling for someone to find him there, as the dozen he'd thought dead were standing, looking about, waiting to sink their swords into his friend. "Percivaaa! Gawaaaa! Hell in all above, help.." and his leg came free, hence forth, and he screamed again, coming forth from his crouch below the wagon, in dirt, scattered about himself, and the thundering of hoofbeats from the north rang in Arthur's legends, set forth in that he knew nothing of them, and took up Gawain's sword, and cut for what he could forth in the rest, and fell cleaved at the shoulder like he'd borne himself out to cut naked.

"To hell with your lies, Kay!" he struck through the thin plates of one guardsman, righting his sword well placed again, and from his knees already, too. "I'll rip you apart myself for this, if it's ever for in god for me to be here alive again!"

"Not so, boy," argued one for less in what he was worth, altogether. Bors struck his head smashed sideways with a mace, from horseback, henceforth unknowing beforeit.

"Botch for queen, haz yeee!" he cried something of the sort, galloping past, and quick to fall in place from heaven set another bawdy naïve, cut by longsword from horseback as well, on Bors the younger's elder warhorse, Saddle, what for.

"Why is this still happening, to me?" Arthur couldn't place it. This didn't make any sense. Bors hadn't betrayed them, or anything... Kay had, and nothing he could figure on could place where Gawain and Percival could have been, or why he had Gawain's sword in his hand, still, or... on the ground, beside him. Where had he fallen, from? He couldn't feel himself, for a while.

Sickness. Less and so for more. He was dead again, it felt like, and nothing for him was here again, and lost, that there it was before. He died, a little, again, and wanted for nothing more than this pain beneath him to cease, and the rain felt cold, and draining, but good, and... he wasn't dead...

How long had it been since Bors rode by? How many had he killed, what for, before running off again, against greater number still? How many were there... for what it was, he could not count for anything in seconds, or hours, that he laid there for. When he had strength enough, he called for "Lancelot!"

"Arthur!" came the quick reply.

"Gawain!" He had strength enough not to press himself out of the mud, some forrit. How much blood did he have in him?

"Arthur, set for!" he hurried to him, pulling him out of the carnage he laid in and cradling him for second more.

"What say you, where is Lancelot?"

"For I'd know, and love you to ask. I can't move, Gawain... I can't stay here..."

"Set for, young son, this is not your time to die. Well enough I'll not leave your side, 'ere the pouring rain. Who is Emris, may I ask?"

"Emris is... Merlin, I think."

"For tu it was his name I heard on the wind, for less than an hour's past."

"Set in for what was, are you alone, then? I cannot remember our past."

"You were asleep, Arthur. We were hunting."

"How many fallen?" Arthur asked, after a painful breath in.

"Sevunteen, maybe more?" he'd looked around, yet still.

"You're a liar, sir..." Arthur didn't not try to look, and Gawain stilled him, for once, with a gentle kiss, and it was like or well enough to forget for Arthur what was happening, exactly. "What..." he'd started.

"Well enough for you and well, it's called the kiss of life, and I'd only have been doing it to keep you from passing out again."

"Ah... Gawain, I was not on the verge of passing out..."

"For sure it was, I saw it in your eyes, sire."

For sure it was funnier that Gawain had stolen a kiss like that, and Arthur would have been more loathed well if no one he liked had thought to kiss him at all to keep him from dying, what for. "Arthur?" he heard someone calling back to him. "Arthur, look at me. Do you see me?"

"Set for, Gawain," he said dazily. "I'm sick for what's happening, still... Bors the younger rode by, with an ally..."

"Bors the younger? For who and what is he, Arthur?"

"A headhunter?"

"Just so, and not a very good one, it seems. He's left his prize scattered all about the roadside and your hem, good king son."

"Well enough, get it off, please, Gawain."

"Just so," he laughed, and brushed off something with his sleeve, from Arthur's clothes. "Can you stand?"

"Forget me not to try," he said forrit, and Gawain steadied him, as he rose, hoisting him up, not at all, to see what he'd try. "Reason well enough, thanks you not to shoulder me, please."

Gawain hastily put Arthur's arm over the back of his neck and in front of his shoulder, holding the boy's weight up well on him, then abandoning it to swing Arthur up into his arms, which was well and good, easy enough. "Lancelot!" he cried out into the darkness. "I'm losing him!"

Lancelot cried out, for the battle was not yet over, and he had hardly time to witness the figure of Gawain standing alone in the rain with Arthur's shivering figure in his arms. He had nothing forrit, to keep from letting Arthur rest somewhere, whilst he aided and abetted the other knight to be, but he doubted anything would stay death from Arthur's willingness to it, just now.

"You're not losing me, you know," he heard him say, in low. "I just can't breathe well, is all."

"Breathe easy, then, my friend. I'll stay with you, and I needed Lancelot to fight a lot harder and stop showboating so much."

"What is... oh," he laughed, and didn't not cringe, or anything, but seemed better off for it. "I'm in death forrit, Gawain. What is this?"

"Sir Gawain, if you don't mind. I've rescued a king, by now."

"Some fortuinnit... what is..." he didn't want to yawn, or anything, just, fainted.

CHAPTER 9

Well enough that Percival did not arrive before Arthur rose, so that when he did, all his friends could be gathered, together with his enemies, so that when he woke and wanted to curse his foul brother's name, he was much more confused, what for, by the sight of this camp, there were in.

"Can we come over, leige?" asked a friendly voice, and Arthur moved, unsure how to squirm right, without it hurting too bad. He was in less pain than he'd thought.

"Well enough, sir," he said lowly, and pushed himself up to a seated position, clearing his eyes and trying to get his bearings. "This is..."

"A druid camp," said the boy, looking oddly at Arthur, and holding a metal dish of some kind, with food in it. "Want something to eat for, leige?"

Arthur looked at the gypsy, and groaned, let himself fall over, again, and called for Gawain to slay all bandits *and* gypsy, for future reference. The gypsies were laughing at him, and he heard Lancelot's voice; "Is Gawain your only go-to naiveslayer, now?"

He was near him, then, crouching down near the campfire. "Where is Kay..." asked Arthur.

"Kay? He's gone off for death and supper, more or less, in a different order. How now, Arthur?"

"I thought he was your king, knight," said a gypsy who'd been watching Arthur since he'd risen, thusly.

"He isn't not my king, but I hardly see how that's interruption worthy."

"I can't get this for hell from my mind," said Arthur, pushing his blankets down over his ankles, and realizing he wasn't not naked, but he didn't balk, he just, started at the bandages, and what for. "Is this real?"

The gypsies who'd been watching him shifted, uncomfortably; they hadn't seen what his body looked like, till then. "Who are you?" one of them asked. A girl, he realized.

"Arthur," he answered. He wanted to pull these bandages from him, but he doubted that was a fair plan.

"Lancelot I can't focus past my dreams, and I can't tell what from which was real, or not. Have any of our number betrayed us, for true?"

Lancelot reasoned that his state made sense. "Waking in the middle of an assault has you confused then, sire? Well enough and good, that should make much more sense than less, I think. No, none of our number have betrayed us. Bors has found someone, in fact, he figured could improve our numbers, and I'm not sure as how to tell you it's a bad idea to say no, to this one."

"Bad idea? For what in saints' purgatory did you think I was avoiding bad ideas for?"

"What's saints' purgatory?" asked a gypsy. He hadn't been baiting them, or anything.

"Here, of course. The world they're trapped in till we finish sending them to hell. Who did Bors the younger find, Lancelot?"

"He's nothing as though he were not a madman. Perhaps a killer well kept in his own right, Bors found him bloody in an alleyway of bodies, last man standing, or, kneeling, rather."

"What so for, Lancelot, will you bring me some clothes, please?"

"Just so," he said, and disappeared, for the time.

"You're asking him politely," a gypsy asked him. He didn't believe in druids, near gypsy camps. "What sort of king are you, anyway?"

"Lancelot's my friend," he answered, wondering from whence these people had come, and how many campfires they had, scattered around in this place he was seeing.

"He's your friend, so you leave him well to hide beneath a wagon whilst he fights for you?" asked one. Arthur didn't not want to shout that he was a fool for knowing nothing, but he looked at him strangely, and said, "do not test me, boy."

One of the other gypsy looked more amused than chagrined, and grinned for it. "Like him well enough for a lordling sod, methinks. How now that we were not friendly druids set to heal you by magic, as we thus already have, now how to be named nefarious gypsy, and set for execution."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Arthur, "were you under the impression that gypsies ever left kings alone, if they didn't order their mass execution every time they laid eyes on them?"

Many and more had been listening, apparently, and burst out for laughing at it. Arthur felt sure he was far too much the center of attention, here, but it was apparent enough that they wished nothing ill for him, at more...

The shirt Lancelot brought for him was long enough to tie a belt loosely around the waist, so he could still breathe, easy, and Lancelot helped him move about the camp, for a few minutes, so he could see where they were, fore. "Who are these people, Lancelot?"

"Travellers, Arthur. Hard enough to keep a free peoples set to land. The druids also are no strangers to equipping unsavory friends, who keep to a similar sounding way of life."

"What are you implying? All good gypsies are druids, and all bad druids are gypsy?"

"More or less, the same thing as pigeons and doves, leigelord. Children and crybabies, what for."

That was a disturbing thought. "Who should I be thanking, Lancelot? I'd like to meet somebody interesting."

"A kingly question, Arthur!" Lancelot looked quite thrilled, forrit, and he brought Arthur to one of the tents, this one with a campfire in the middle of it, instead of outside.

The woman inside was topless, and had tattoos worked all over her upper body, around her breasts and over her nipples, across her arms, spindling wildly, and she had dark set eyes Arthur didn't know how to look into, exactly, and was distracted by the patterns on her body.

"You like the look of me then, e'er boy?" she asked him. There were others in the circle, but she reigned supreme, in Arthur's memory, thereafter.

He wasn't really pausing, to address her, while his eyes followed the designs of the patterns etched into her flesh, what for. "Arthur?" asked Lancelot, and the boy king did not hear him, presently.

"He has seen them before, fair knight," the druid woman witnessed. "This will not do for him to leave himself unaccompanied henceforth at camp, I am sure."

"Hear that, Arthur? She's going to help you make some *friends* while we're here."

"Morgana..." Arthur said of no accord.

"Who said...?" asked the druid woman whose skin he couldn't take his eyes from. "What name for, boy?"

Arthur wasn't sure for less and more, that he could figure what to say, in his defense. "Morgana," he said again, unsure as to how to keep himself from collapsing, but... "She's not here, anymore," he said, then...

"You know the witch?" asked a druid girl, inside the tent, what for.

"Witch?" Arthur wasn't sure what she was talking about. "I'm... I'm going too slowly... I thought we could delay here... that I could heal, better, before we set out, but... I can't... Morgana is waiting for me at Castle Fairbanks, and I'm mad and a coward if I don't make greater haste, after she called out to me, the way she did..."

"Fool enough for sisterly love, cat," said the druid woman with tattoos. "You are well spent and for, but sleep would plague you, I think. Lancelot, help him sit more comfortably, there, and someone give him something to smoke, what for," she ordered, then.

Arthur had a pipe, of sorts, in his hands, sitting around the campfire, in the druid elder's tent, what for. He put the flame to the herb innit, sucking forth, and a girl beside him reached over and closed her thumb on a whole, beside the bowl piece, where the herb would go, and closed off, the pipe filled with smoke, and she watched his eyes, nodded, for him to witness her, and let go of the hole, so the smoke flew from the pipe and into his lungs.

He coughed and sputtered, of course, dropped the small stick he'd lit it with, to put it out, and handed the pipe to the girl who'd helped him smoke affectively. He watched her, then, draw in smoke, and when she'd filled her lungs, she took his face to hers, and breathed into his mouth, which he took quite readily, and it felt easy, and smooth, and she was an excellent kisser, what for.

"You are less a king than I thought, I think," said the girl, and he wasn't sure what she meant.

"I'll be a king when..." he hesitated, then said, "when less is more, I suppose."

"When you free the sword from the wizard's stone?" asked the druid elder.

"What is your name?" Arthur asked the druid girl who'd passed the smoke to him, in kissing him.

"Vatka," she answered him, and he wasn't sure what the smile in particular meant, when she'd said it.

"Arthur," he said to her, like she didn't already know.

"No? Not High King of Camelot, Arthur?" her sister asked him.

"For sated, Kefka, shut up," said Vatka.

"Arthur," said Lancelot, and he passed the pipe to him, which had come around the fire, by then. Arthur took it again, met Vatka's eyes, forrit, and was going to smoke it himself before she crawled over closer to him, and insisted on holding the pipe for him. "Bloodied rib bones make for poor support, sometimes," she said sweetly, and he put the stick to the plant packed into the bowl of the pipe, breathed it in, again, and she released the smoke, and he passed the lungful of it back to her, with a kiss, and she breathed it back into his face, making him laugh, when he broke from kissing her.

She passed what she smoked back to him again, too, and his head was swimming hells for more in all of it. Time was easier to witness, and he had less and more the right mind to stay in this place for long enough to wear a pair of pants, comfortably. He wasn't sure what had made his legs so weak, altogether, what for, but he was glad he was sitting down, still.

One of the girls, Kefka, he thought, was getting cute with him, and he didn't really know how to avoid her touch, till he looked at Lancelot, like this was the last thing he wanted happening to him, while he was high, and Lancelot kept harping her for attention, long enough for Arthur to escape her, and get back over to a wall of the tent, where Vatka had been sitting some time before, but he wasn't sure where she'd gone to, yet...

"Are you alright?" asked another girl. He couldn't remember *her* name, specifically.

"Me? No, yes, I'm just... this feels really different, for me, you know?"

"You don't like Kefka?" she asked him. He looked at her strangely, and she laughed. "Hey, most smart boys do not. Kefka does not touch boys like *we* touch boys," she gestured to her friends, plural.

"Crows and ravens then, I suppose," he said in wondering. He'd liked the way Vatka had been talking to him, and he didn't know how they expected him to run about and socialize, just presently.

"Crows and ravens? Who dare?" asked another girl, of this one's companions. It was Vatka, he realized, and she'd been hidden among the four of them.

"Vatka," he witnessed. "I'm surely unfit to wed you, you know. I'd make a poor druid... gypsy, sorry."

They laughed at him, and he felt better, forrit. "Not to be wed?" she asked him, purring a little, and looking at her friends, knowingly. "How sure are you, that I would not simply take advantage of your undesired state?"

"What... and abandon me here?"

"Words do not trick you so uneasily, do they?"

"Set before, I never answer a gypsy's questions more than three times, all at once."

She looked at him odd, then laughed, and snuggled up beside him, putting her head on his shoulder, and holding his weakened body well enough up, still sitting, so he could enjoy the fire and company, still, without collapsing.

"You smell really nice," said Arthur, clouds and visions dancing about him, wondering him where to go, for next and sure.

"You take for less is more, and sure, sure," she said to him, and started nibbling on his neck.

"Bring him back from the fade, good Vatka?" he heard the elder saying, thusly.

"More in one that I should," she said back, and kissed Arthur's ear, then pressing his chest slowly back, so that he was laying here, with her over him. She took what he was, well enough, and slipped his shirt off in for tuit, that she could kiss and touch him better, and he moved in her, when she came in close to him, so he could tell her he wanted to be there, still, and he felt more awake and alert than he had in countless hours unending, since he'd woken crushed beneath the wagon, before.

She made love to him as though she'd known who he was for as many as a thousand years, and Arthur wasn't sure how many people were still in the tent with them, watching them, but the herbs he'd smoked made him feel freer, and happier still to have a girl like this wanting to touch him and talk to him, and for the sake of what she liked about him, and not what she wanted for to capture with her wiles, as Kefka had been attempting.

He laid with her most every night, while they stayed with the gypsies, and it was easy enough not to be able to find her at all, during the daylight hours, until she would appear by whatever fireside he'd been witnessing, smoke with him, get him far too high for everything happening not to be new for always, and lay with him, openly or in secret privacy, and more often it was the prior, and Arthur wasn't sure what to do about how much he was going to dislike the kings' courts, after this.

"Why aren't women made knights?" Arthur asked Gawain, at one point, earlier in the evening, after another girl had sought his company ought, and laid with him for surely before the sun had set.

"A knightly king you'd be, to knight all the women he's lain with."

"Sure enough, you thought I was less choosey about my friends than I was my knights?"

He laughed, "Just so, Arthur, I misjudged you for a moment. It is well to assume you'd bed far more mercenaries than knight, by the end of it."

"Oh well enough and good. Then witches next, I suppose? What do they know about Morgana, in this place?"

"Morgana? Who pray tell is Morgana, Arthur?"

"My sister, apparently..." he rested his head on his arms, crossed over his kneecaps. "I'm not sure how to rescue her, after we take back the citadel... She's being held at Castle Fairbanks, apparently by my late father's cursed sleep, or some such nonsense."

"The sleeping beauty at Castle Fairbanks is Morgan la Fae?"

"That's an ugly name for her," Arthur witnessed.

"Sure enough and well, none would know her for it. They say 'Morgana' sounds evil, and 'Morgan la Fae' sounds wholesome, or some sort."

"How is it you know both names for her?"

"Set in for, I did not remember till that druid girl started watching you, and I'm just as now witnessing that she is not the same one as the two before."

"For serious?" Arthur fell for it, and looked out where Gawain was watching, then turned back to him, rolling his eyes. "You're less dog than I am, just so."

"Not so, good king. Looking well enough past that; it is the elder female you keep forgetting to pay homage to, and that's why she likes you so much, I think."

He didn't not witness, then, where Gawain had indicated she was watching him from, but he didn't stare, openly. "Well she hasn't passed any smoke to me..."

"No you'll find uncommon are the girls who can play boys into such a tizzy so fast. Short wonder, neither way, it's not like it'd be that hard to them to do it *all* the time."

"I have no idea why they wouldn't!" Arthur was exasperated, and laughing, what for.

"No one should ever have said you were a forgetful king, I think. They'd have lost themselves on the shores of a bygone kingdom."

"You're boring me *just* so that I'll look back at the druid woman again. Irritating, Gawain... what's she doing?"

"Preparing to give you a proper sendoff, looks like." She'd entered her tent, again, and left the flap to close it

halfway propped, meeting his eyes not once, all forrit.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Oh no? Where is your darling Vatka?”

He didn’t look around, more than a second for. “Surely loving who she will, for whatever time she’s taking.”

“Sure enough and well, Arthur; you fucked her friend she sent your way and past the test. Unrelated to that, you’d have nothing to even say to the druid woman, this whole time?”

Arthur wasn’t sure what to say, exactly, other than to get up, and go over to the tent they’d been looking at, so he could crouch, and enter the tent where the topless druid woman, with the... the tattoos covered her whole body, apparently.

CHAPTER 10

Lost as he felt about himself, as of late, with rumours of Galahad's ascension to king, plaguing him in the villages, he bared himself forward to believe that if such a thing ever came to rise, he would find no end of knights ready to fight against such a fiend.

Besides or not, it was impossible not to believe he was who everyone thought he was, and he wondered at the magic in the stone and the sword, thereinnit, and he hoped there was something else to this entire philosophy, that he couldn't be here, alone, by himself any longer, except that he was, and he doubted there was anything more to do about the fact that he'd been alone for most or more since he'd invited Kay to come with him and Lancelot, and decided he couldn't balk from decisions already made and lived by, for Kay was less for well for belittling others nearly so gregariously as before, and easy enough he'd have been the inciter in the lynching crowd, or the cunning alias to live in solitude while the people of his past toil away for him, as Garrow, his father, had always seemed to be imagining for himself, before Merlin brought a second son to him, apparently; an offer too good to question too closely, or seem to regret at all, right away.

Leaving him to his fates was less or more what he'd decided he'd never need to do as he wanted, therefore again and on into the next hour, and Arthur's thoughts turned to more present things, and he wondered at Geraint, who was a rapist and murderer murderer, turned knight now, apparently, and he was well enough for Arthur to pretend to detest, oft times, for sake of Bors and Kay, whom he truly did detest, often and always, and he made no secret of his own intelligence, well enough to keep Geraint interested in actually serving this one ornery teenage king.

Set in more for his life was less and more interesting, from day to day, but they were not uncloset to the citadel, by then, though they'd detoured for a number of foreign patrols Arthur was sure were taking advantage of the lack of a real king, and turning bandit, like all the others.

More than less, too, he was often sure that they'd never need another knight so long as he lived if he never had to hear of this Sir Galahad again, and the name sickened him, and the word God was wearing on him now, too, and it felt perverse, and he wanted to tear someone's head off, sometimes, for being so ready to adhere to an invisible dictator, as dictated by a church. It maddened him and sickened him and was against everything he was trying to build, but he didn't know how to keep

More so less is more, that he would have had to leave his life on hold, for some length of time, and finish this chapter of it, was not a regularly occurring thought, but he was too often plagued by thoughts of servitude, and overall productivity, and irritatingly forrit enough he was being as productive as he dared, but it was not the sort of service he was accustomed to, for most of his life, so when he found himself too well relaxed, he would sense that Garrow was looking for him, or that Kay was furious, or one of the village idiots thought he could be talked down to, again, to told what to do, no matter how often.

He sickened himself regularly enough by letting his thoughts go back to his old life, every time they crossed through another village, because the more time he spent, day after day, leaving wherever he wanted to leave, then disappearing from minds and hearts so soon as never, he wondered how often he would need to disappear into Camelot somewhere, with his family, his friends, and enjoy some respite, for a change in circumstance, to ease and replenish his will and sore thoughts.

Accessing the rest of this chamber didn't seem impossible, so long as he kept moving to the leftmost passage, but that was hardly any good reason to stray from that until he felt a good reason to do so, because he was quite sure for himself that Merlin hadn't meant to join up with him before he drew the sword from the stone and claimed his birthright, henceforth and that he could see him again, and talk to someone who would really open up to him, and to whom he didn't have to prove himself, so regularly, in the face of ignorance of a warriors' or ranger's intuitions, what haven, so well as more to their own personal life experiences, which they thought prepared them for such a task as this, so, hah.

A million things and more he'd learned himself, just from spending thought in the open realm Merlin brought him back to, time and again, all throughout his childhood, henceforth. He was well enough and wise that when the next passage appeared on the left side, he took it well enough to want to step back into the other passage again, and work his way back to the right, therefore, where one such door shouldn't have disappeared, but did. "What else got change, then?" he wondered at it, running his fingers along the red stone.

Supremely undead was not a decent way to understand for himself what these creatures were supposed to represent, but life as he was living it, so for as often well enough that these were lives he hadn't lived in ages, which wasn't a thing to be had, but long before anything happened to him, Arthur figured he must have learned how to read and write in different ways, because he could see things, in the symbols and etchings that other people didn't know was there, and believed to be some chance or illusion, when it was pointed out or explained to them, what for.

He liked the idea that the king knew something about stone and magic both, so that he could see what people would be meaning to say to him, when they came for his justice, or vote of confidence, or resources or access to wisdom, henceforth. He believed fully and well enough, that first set through this chamber here, on the left, back again, to fool the door, and be pretty sure that you would know the room you wanted to find by walking into one, and feeling it out, what for.

It was well and easy enough to know why he was alone in here, at least, in that seven or eight hours of looking

for the entrance had left his crew with nothing but frustrated none for, and resting that he was so well enough, he doubted he could get away with finding nothing in here, after all he'd done to prove that magic had more to it than walking the perimeter and checking every corner. In fact, a thorough sweep was well enough to fool any fool well enough to try forrit like he had no instinct or wherewithal to speak of, what for.

Sitting in the fourth chamber he found on the right bothered him only slightly, because he didn't know which panel to press, on the wall in front of him, so he decided to press both, at the same time, and when he did so, nothing he could see happening was happening, so he left the room as if he wasn't sure what it was for, and did nothing but run his fingers along the right side again, looking about for new and interesting things to explore into.

He laughed at his luck, for finding an alcove he'd not noticed before, and was sure he had no idea how it had appeared so suddenly. Being at rest with the magic in this labyrinth, simply in knowing he had nothing to find if walking the course was nothing to gain it by, so he left himself room to laugh and witness things in different ways, and stay for course to think on something else for a while, so he could come back here, in his mind, and see things differently, again.

CHAPTER 11

John so set for more in that he wasn't allowed to be here, as Arthur, so it was John he'd been named, and he was sure as hell ready or not to decide to pull his sword from under the bundle he was carrying, and start tearing things apart, but he had nothing for it, and walked slowly, but warily, and not at all like he was sure, or unafraid, because he wanted to look to be what he was, if he failed, a broken child, and a slave, too.

He had on less or more a brown shirt with a flimsy hood on it, and the material he wore wasn't one he'd worn before, and it wasn't uncomfortable, or anything, but his legs, correctly enough, looked so battered from the road and fights, as well as being crushed and pinned under the wagon that night, that he looked as though he'd been beaten and chained, and his legs were bare, and his arms were, too, and he looked tired, or less than something to be concerned about, unless you were fond of children, or something.

No one quite noticed him though, and the coliseum was set apart, well enough, from where the last of the buildings of the city had people in and about them. The streets grew barren, but Arthur didn't stop to witness what was around him, though he were a slave with a course of action, what for, and he was sure that he didn't need to wait to draw the sword from the stone, unless he wanted to actually prove he was king, to anybody, in which case, it was the sword he carried bundled in a blanket, just now, that he would have to win the day with, and he smiled at the memory of Gawain finding out what sword he'd been using, the night he'd woken you to madness and hell on earth, what for.

"You thought this was *mine*? Are you mad? It's a bloody *greatsword* Arthur! Look at it! See this?" He held up his own sword, which was called a hand and a half, or a bastard sword, and the other he'd found near Arthur, which was a two handed sword, and even the prior would have been much too awkward for Arthur to comfortably wield, but the greatsword, somehow, still felt okay, when Gawain handed it to him, later on.

"You look ridiculous," he said, watching him admire the structure of it, as he moved the huge sword around in the light. "But you've bled and died with that sword, and come back to keep it, so if you start out with that, and pick up a smaller one later in the fight, as well you shouldn't do unless you can barely lift your arms, or you're bored, and you need a change of pace, to keep you alive, what for, then hell, you might just get strong enough to actually wrest that magic sword from the great big boulder, boy!"

Gawain was irritating less so when he just called him boy, or brother, or son, sometimes, which sounded more like little brother, when he said it, though Arthur didn't really know what a father who wasn't your enemy was supposed to look like, or a mother, for that matter, because he remembered Garrow's mistresses, and was more chagrined for the memory, just lately.

"Going somewhere, boy?" asked one such person as Arthur wouldn't mind decapitating, henceforth.

"Sure enough sir, yes. My master-"

"What you so sure about yourself for, eh? What the hell you up to?"

Arthur just ducked past him and slipped into the coliseum, like any sensible errand boy not to be detained should do, and hurried down the hall, ignoring the shouts to get his arse back there, and he wondered how long it would take to...

He swung the blade of the sword around the corner he'd been waiting behind, right as the guard who'd been after him came around it, and his next thrust was a stab, through the torso, and he pulled free of the guard and carried his sword back on through to the lower levels of the coliseum, what for.

Lasting so long as he had, he would never have to believe this was really going to happen to him, but he knew he had to figure out how to get past these ideals what for, that guided the masses of the greater regions that made up Camelot, what for, and Arthur wasn't sure what, under the sun that he could get to, would not be fair to call Camelot, so long as there was one refuge within it for sanity, and they sought to believe in an order of friendship, such as his rounded table of knights was set to be, therefore.

He believed less in what he was saying, the more time he spent with Gawain and Lancelot and Percival away from the other three, and he was sure that less was more when it came to what he brought Geraint in on, because he doubted their latest knight had so much the more reason to stay loyal to Arthur, if he thought he was cow towing, or outing his cover identity, apparently.

He believed in nothing more than his friends, the moment they stepped out for where they were, when he spotted Gawain, first, on a level above him, and then Percival, higher above still, and Lancelot was climbing down lower, from the highest point he could see, and Arthur realized he'd have killed all the sentries on the higher level, firstways... ..

This was less or more what Arthur had been waiting for, and he couldn't tear his eyes from the center pavilion, where an uneven stone sat centerpiece, with a quarter or less of a sword's blade to hilt protruding from it, and the hilt called to Arthur, because he knew what it meant, for him, and he never understood what a pavillion was supposed to mean, other than perhaps a dais, which this wasn't close to not resembling, but he didn't know what else to think about it, because one of the occupying soldiers hailed to him, barked at him, and came at him, and so Arthur took free his sword, and cried, "for Camelot!" and cut him down.

Steel raging against itself rang out in the mostly emptied coliseum, for seating well more than tens of thousands, or millions more, Arthur couldn't guess in the slightest, but he knew greater numbers in part, for some form or another, in

theroy.

Accessing the rest of his life was nothing for him, if not impossible as he drew even breath with his enemy, and witnessed the opening that Lancelot always had for people, to take his sword from him in a quick twist, and Arthur did stop not to spare him, but blasted the chestpiece of his armor apart with his swordpoint, and wrested it free from him again.

Blasting well enough and good, more for the others were living it up as well as they could, and Arthur hoped nobody was counting the score, later. It was an evil seeming thought, at first, till he reminded himself that it kept you distracted and with your friends in the grim work of what they did with blades, what for.

It didn't feel grim, though, to Arthur, because every time he looked at one of these men he was killing, he thought of all the people who should have believed they'd have a chance at pulling the sword free from the stone, and were cut down, forrit, and left to die, in an alley, or an entryway, or a lower hallway, as Arthur had played witness to, already.

He died a little watching the corpse of a child he'd never met, lay there in the hall, like she'd been caught sneaking in, and dispatched forrit, and he screamed for her now, blasting his greatsword through an arm cavity, and taking through to himself again the weapon, so he could howl as he witnessed, high above and below, "The day is won!"

Lancelot moved through space like a current, his longsword arcing like he'd never had to slow for a moment, and it struck Bors the younger's head clean from his neck, in a sweep, and the paltry mercenary fell, what for.

Arthur breathed, still unsure he could do this, still, alone, and looked around. How many had they killed to win the coliseum, what for? What for now, could they do to keep it, and to fill it again, safely?

"For King!" cried Lancelot, high from above, his sword cleaned of Bors the younger's lifeblood and put up, again. "Set in this that was, I do believe your planning has carried us far enough! Allow Sir Gawain and I to witness you a host of witnesses, what for!"

"For King Arthuuuuuur!" Kay screamed, still red from battle, and the other four howled their oaths and thrust their swords or fists into the air, as Kay was doing. Arthur laughed, and figured well enough his foster brother hadn't witnessed Bors the younger's fate, without self reflection, what for.

"Take yourselves to it, then!" Arthur cried out what for.

"Set in for yourself a celebration, Arthur! Your friends stand tall with you!" Lancelot assured him, as he and Gawain made to depart.

"Well enough what he said, king and friend!" cried Gawain, hurrying after Lancelot's example, out the chamber, "Take for our love your own, and let us know you believe in us by hiding somewhere in the coliseum, what for!"

Hiding? Arthur approached the sword in the stone, witnessed it, glanced at Kay, and told him to try it as many times as he wanted, and then went to feel himself out, in an open entry chamber, for the coliseum's groundfloor.

CHAPTER 12

"Arthur..." he could hear Lancelot's voice over the rumble of the coliseum. How many thousand where there, had Percival said? From Percival, he doubted he could guess at what the real number was. "When you draw out the sword, don't falter with it, it's not yours, or anything..."

For a moment Arthur didn't trust himself to speak. They were in the dark of the tunnel, ready to walk out, the lot of them, into the open coliseum, filled with the city surrounding the palace. "If I faltered, even a little, they'd name me heretic king, and say I used magic to wrest the sword, I think."

"Just so, Arthur. Be brave; he'll try nice and hard, for you..." The others were silent, still, Kay looked more nervous than the others, yet, and Gawain gave Arthur's shoulder a reassuring squeeze.

He wasn't sure how sound could fly through this place, but the announcer cried for the city's champions, and the city therein cheered for them, as Arthur, Lancelot, Kay, Gawain, Percival and Geraint stepped out of the tunnel, and approached, far be it from them right away, the stone in the arena's center, henceforth.

"Who to say first?" asked Lancelot, wondering for what they'd decided on.

"Gawain told him what for," said Percival.

"Gawain, of Arren!" cried a voice, from somewhere, and Arthur couldn't see from where, exactly, but he didn't want to play the foolish boy looking all around for it.

Gawain stepped forward, up to the stone, and there was a strange reaction from the crowd, Arthur thought, though he could not tell what for, or why so. He pulled at the hilt of the sword, stoutly, and it remained where it was, steadfast.

No one had expected more, apparently, or so he might have thought, but Arthur could feel something, here... They were ready for a king, and Arthur didn't know for what to say to them about it, just yet.

"Percival, of John!" came next, when Gawain bowed his reluctant surrender, and stepped away from the sword in the stone.

They all knew the legend, in these parts, of course, and it had spread to all different corners of Camelot, serving the will of Merlin's rumour trains, Arthur figured on. Many and more had seen their friends and family try the sword in this stone a hundred times or more, and yet none had wrested it free, still yet.

Percival stepped down, and he called, "Lancelot, of Lancelot!" and Arthur laughed outright, smiling as the powerful swordsman and fencer stepped forth, smiling and waving to the citizens out among their friends and kinsmen, in the coliseum proper seating, what for.

He pulled and yanked at the sword, as hard as he might, and went forward well enough to see if he could get a running start and yank at it, or so. It didn't work, but it had people laughing, and enjoying what for, again.

"Geraint, of Crossing!" called was next. Geraint was a dark haired fellow, with a sure pink face and too much wile in him to quit smirking, at a time like now. He pulled the sword stoutly, surely, and then left it there, and as the crowd watched in awe, he stepped close to Arthur, put a hand on his shoulder, and whispered something in his ear. "What do you think they'll imagine I'm saying to you?" was all he had to say, for Arthur to crack a grin, and love him all the better, for it.

"Kay, of Garrowson!" came next, and Kay looked as though he were sick, or to be killed, and he was wary of Lancelot, still, and Arthur thought well on the powerful knight for killing Bors the younger so quickly, and without ceremony, just so.

Kay didn't try for long before he abandoned his effort, and from the crowd rained a hatred Arthur had not anticipated, what for. "They don't know that's not all of us," said Lancelot. Arthur was small in frame, and still in his slave frock, what for, beaten and tired, looking, and young well, to boot.

"Arthur, of Penndragon!" came the final contestant. There was a mad shift in the coliseum, and Arthur couldn't believe his ears, as he stepped forward, and silence fell, all around him.

"This can't be real," he heard himself whispering. He didn't think he'd ever even looked at the sword's hilt, before this moment, and it was gold and ivory, and powerful to behold, and caught the light there forth in such a strange splendor, to him.

He could see where the blade met stone, and did not know how it was stuck in, by looking at it. He touched the sword, pulling it free as though it were merely sitting on a table, to be lifted.

He turned, faced the circle of faces high and low, in the coliseum, waiting, watching, and as their fervor hastened, boiled, their confusion mounted, he lifted the sword high above his head, spun, flourished the blade in a practiced motion, and thrust the blade, hard, back into the stone, and left it there.

"See now," he said in a low voice, that was drowned out by the roar of the city itself, watching. "Who else, wants to try?"

CHAPTER 13

"This is less entertaining without that awkward angle, what for," said Lancelot, to Arthur. He'd been back up to try the sword in the stone, once or twice since Arthur had recast it there, and now the citizens from the coliseum were all getting the chance to enter the ground floor and try to pull the sword for themselves. "How did you know to do that? That you could push it back into the stone like that, at a different angle?"

"The sword told me I could," Arthur answered, glancing at the line of villagers in the entry tunnel, fronted by guardsmen, keeping them at bay until their turns. "Who's guards are these?"

"Not to let you change the subject, but there's a lord occupying the citadel, and he kept the ones who took this from doing so, themselves. What did your sword, say, exactly."

Arthur motioned for Lancelot to hand him the longsword he had at his side, in the dirt, where they sat and talked beside one of the side barriers to the coliseum groundfloor arena. "See here?" he pointed to an area on the blade, just some above the hilt. "There's an inscription on the sword, after you pull it free, that say; *'Take me up, or cast me back,'* and I knew I couldn't take up the sword for good, just yet, so I recast it to the stone, and it cut through into it."

Lancelot nodded, fascinated, quite so. "The other one disappeared, after you pulled it back. I don't know if you had time to notice, but that stone looks unblemished, save for where you stuck the sword fresh back into it."

"Who's that old woman, Lancelot?" Arthur asked, watching her cross the fairgrounds toward the stone, to try her hand at it. Gawain was arguing with one of the guards, back beside the line of villagers, pointing and waving.

"Old?" asked Lancelot, "she's barely even my elder, I think. A handsome woman." Arthur didn't look away from her when he said; "I kind of hope she can pull it free, herself."

Lancelot raised an eyebrow, and turned to watch the woman in question try and wrest the sword free, and Arthur could tell she was getting a lot of attention, for doing it. "Did Gawain tell them not to bar women from trying, just now?" asked Arthur, in question.

"For sure I think he must have. There are some there now, in the tunnel, still yet."

Arthur laughed, and smiled, when the woman glanced toward him, and left the sword in the stone, to retreat back off the ground floor. "She's quite beautiful."

"So is more that she thinks you are, too," said Lancelot. "She's never met a king like you before. None of us had."

"Never before, you mean? Never by itself means not past, present, nor future, you know."

"I think we all knew you were out there, somehow, Arthur. I didn't stop doing what I was doing because I never thought I'd have to stay alone, to keep doing it."

"But you didn't know, so you did it anyway, as long as it took, and if you hadn't..."

"Sure fire I could not have been coded enough to greet you with chivalry, set for."

Arthur hadn't actually heard the word before. "What is chivalry, Lancelot?"

"The principles you value most, Arthur. I've half a mind to make you write it all down for us, at Round Table."

Arthur wanted to kiss Lancelot, just then, for saying it like that, as a proper place to be, for one and all who wanted it there. "Set in for again, I'm more in love with my own ideas than before, I think. Perhaps the sword has inflated me some."

"Did your friend Merle ever tell you what the sword might be called?" Lancelot asked him what for.

"No and yes. He said it didn't not have a name but like the wizard who cast the sword into the stone, to start, its name faded from memory, so that people could learn of its power again, with new memories, what for."

"Else perhaps the myth of the sword eclipses the myth of the man wielding it."

"Or boy, so far as half the court wants to murder me, for bare legs and a beardless face."

"True or fair enough as it were. Have..." he trailed off, Lancelot did, and watched the few new people who came and tried the sword. "This won't be pretty."

"What did he just put on his hands?" Arthur asked.

"Grip powder?" Lancelot suggested, and when the person in question reached out to grab the hilt of the sword, an explosion of light ripped him away from it, and hurled him back across the groundfloor, skidding and tumbling in the dirt, what for.

The crowd went wild for that, and they wanted to see Arthur pull the sword from the stone again, in case it was broken, for some sureness, but Arthur left it alone, and made sure it was still these peoples' friends and family they were watching try to pull the sword for real, in front of the whole kingdom city.

Likely as not, Merlin would never come, if Arthur let this place hollow out some, in boredom, by doing this before pulling the sword for anyone, but if anything, hours after hours later, the coliseum had *more* partisans in it, screaming and shouting for their favorite choices for king, or to tell a brother or son to try hard, much, way harder.

He lived as he was, existing, hoping to find some solace in that it was Gawain, and not himself, who had ensure women were not being barred, until... "If she hadn't done that herself, and inspired Gawain to act... nothing I ever said about women would have mattered, after all this."

Lancelot was sure to miss what he'd been saying, save not that he hadn't taken his eyes off that same women, for long at all, in between glances. "Sure enough you're more than right to some, Arthur. I like well that you don't know

that was you the whole time, anyway.”

“What say for?”

“She trusted you, King Arthur. The good ones are all learning to trust you, and with a king like you to protect them, and stand for right, they are free to show the world that they too, can see what you are, and what you’ll need the world to become, for you.”

He was watching her again, Arthur, and not Lancelot, who in turn was watching Arthur. “I want to go and talk to her, but I don’t want...” it felt hard to explain.

“For them to think you’d have anything to say to the only women they wanted to fail at it? Or so for they never would have thought you cared, so much more and thus far, until you singled her out before this was all over and named her pretty woman, and not sword bearer.”

“A sentiment I was hoping to hear from my own lips, and did, quite apparently, for I’m pretty sure king means *your* lips are mine, too.”

“Now Arthur,” said Lancelot, ever the champion at laughing only in the way his sentences formed for each other, “when I said it was really *you* doing all these brave, clever things the whole time... I was only making you try to feel better for hating women, so much, you know?”

Arthur was snickering, and he wanted to watch that woman some more, but he didn’t think he should, so he watched the sword in the stone, for more longer. This was less and sure what he’d come here for, but he was anxious about the sword again, with so many people coming for it, coveting it, he just wanted to draw it out again and keep it away from them. “They never thought it was going to change, any...” he realized, watching the scene.

“The people?”

“They were so used to the sword being in there, for so long, sealed by magic, they thought it would be a constant. That it would never really leave, and they could know real magic wasn’t real, after all, and somebody had simply fused a sword to a boulder, apparently.”

“It is less and for that you should not know Gawain is trying to get your attention,” said Lancelot, and gestured.

Arthur looked over at Gawain, and realized how few people were still around, and he figured some or many more were waiting to try again. He didn’t stop to watch Gawain, or figure to look like permission was needed, or grantable, by anyone else but himself.

Arthur strode forward, surely, moving past the people still waiting to get to the sword. Someone yelled at him to back off, before he recognized the boy in the slave’s garb, with battered up legs.

Arthur approached without apology, or waiting, or thinking he was ever going to need these people to believe less than he could make them believe. “This is *my* sword, and it does not make my station, but I do. You will not take this symbol to hell for me.” He pulled the sword from the stone, flourished it wildly, swinging once, twice, and then slammed the side of the blade into the top of the stone, and shattered it in two, with a CRACK! that blasted through the coliseum.

“Long live the king!” Lancelot screamed into the hush that had followed Arthur’s breaking of the stone, what for. “Hail to the kingdom and love live King Arthur Penndragon!” The roar made Arthur scream for sanctity, and praise his blade for it by holding it high, well above his head.

“Hail to the king!” the crowd would cry. “Long live King Arthur!”

CHAPTER 14

Lancelot, try as he might, could not help but laugh when Gwenevere introduced herself, beside her brother, apparently, Gawain, at the look on Arthur's face, and his stammered, "How do you do?" For what seemed like a less than kingly fellow, set fore lasting that he was called the true king anyhow, so... what?

"Your... your sister, Gawain?"

"Not so, fool boy. She's lying. I hate women, and especially do I hate devil spawns, more forrit and less."

"The bandit king... you said was your father..."

"Just so, young king, Highness, I presume so far, but less and more your seat won't rise too much higher, so perhaps I'll reverse to King and well enough and good."

"I'd prefer you called me Arthur, not even when we're alone together," said Arthur, irritated that he was tripped out, just then, and more sure when he said, "unless of course you'd forgotten how old you really thought I was, when we became friends, back in May or so."

"Do you actually know what May is, villager?" asked Lancelot, to the slaveclothed king.

"More enough and no, Merlin taught it to me wrong four hundred thousand years ago. Again, once, in September last, and twice last June in February, you know."

"You were educated, then? You're quite well spoken for a villager, you know..."

"Not a lot forgetting that, but no, she was not the one I'd had to leave back then before, you know."

"Oh... no, he won't cut that out until we give him his clothes back, I think," observed Lancelot.

"No only just, for good measure enough and well. I do believe a throne and scepter are in order as well." Arthur got Gwenevere giggling, with that one, and smiled forrit. "You're quite in more or less stunning, Lady Gwenevere. When you came to draw it I half expected it to work... or did it, and you were just being kind to me?"

She smiled at him, sure enough she liked the slaveclothed boy king. "Sure enough, you'd never really know..."

He lifted his sword, to look at the blade, then turned it around, holding the hilt out to Gwenevere, and said, "Would you care to observe? It's called Excalibur."

She marveled at the craftsmanship, on the handle, but not really, because she'd seen the handle about a thousand more than twelve times, or so. She gripped it though, fascinated, and held it up, looking dangerous enough with a sword like that, and she smiled, and twisted and moved the blade about, checking the light glancing off from it. "I couldn't see this inscription before... You are quite the hero, I take it."

"Sure enough," he took the sword back when she handed it to him, "I have no idea what that means?"

"No," said Gwenevere, "but if we don't stop being friends so fast my dear brother will never get to show you his favorite passtimes, back at the citadel."

"I don't..." Arthur didn't know what she meant. Then he said, "Your father holds the citadel, for the true king rising? Truly?"

"More so that it was not any other way, there and back to last time, but no, our dear uncle took control of it not and long after he tricked his brother, our father, into letting him join his assault on the citadel and coliseum. His own men took the citadel, and held it fast away from our bandit lord father, what for."

Arthur looked, up toward the skyline, where he witnessed the citadel, and they made for it, with Lancelot in the lead, and they were well enough and good away from the coliseum, where Percival and Arthur's other knights, whom were named and knighted by Arthur, once, before the whole coliseum, and twice if they'd wanted, to let them know he wasn't forgetful, just honest.

Percival would get a true knighthood, in Arthur's eyes, and he knew well enough who would stay to his inner circle, what for.

They talked little and less, for where they travelled, for they did it on foot, and quickly, too, four of them present, so for Sir Gawain, his sister the lady Gwenevere, Sir Lancelot the bold and brave, and King Arthur, nameless and crownless, till for less and more again.

They couldn't speak to one another, when they reached the palace grounds. Arthur was far too excited to know what to say to his friends about any of it. He didn't not want to see the throne, either, and he was sure he didn't have to not marry Gwenevere, just so.

"Did you get me a table, yet?" asked Arthur, plenty enthralled by the splendor of the palace, but sure it was funnier to ask, just then.

"A table?" asked Gwenevere, sure she'd heard for sure what he'd said, at least.

"Laugh it less, lady, to be sure," said Sir Gawain, as they climbed more stairs, once inside the palace courtyard. "He has done a thing we'd never have to think was wrong, for never once did I need to tell you more, that among a table of equal knights-"

"Respected knights," corrected Arthur, "if I told you I loved you less than Lancelot, it would be a fool thing to say, less and more that you were never equal in my eyes, either."

"My lord king," said Gwenevere, "you have stolen my heart in a word, I think. How to know how to do, such a thing, at so young a score?"

He didn't know what to say to her, exactly. He was sure he was quite flushed, and red in the face, but he just, adjusted his blonde hair and tried not to notice how much funnier everyone in the palace seemed to be, when they witnessed the slaveclothed boy with the king's true sword. "Is your lord uncle present here? I should much like to thank him, and knight him, if you think it wise, Gawain."

"More or less, when I said his brother betrayed him and took the palace, I'd much and more meant his son, for times and here again."

"You *stole* the citadel from under your father's nose?"

"He's quite the card, at times for yet again. Left me in charge, and they've hardly let me leave for ages. I'm much and more sure you'll love this palace as well as I have, lord king."

He wanted her to call him Arthur, like, really bad. He thought for sure there was only one way to convince her to do that, and he had more enough mind to delay till he was in king's clothes, again. Or surely not, because here and now the throne room they entered, and Arthur laughed at the sight of a little boy, quite comfortable, lounging in his throne, waiting, apparently.

He looked to be about eight, or so, and Lancelot might have shouted at him, if Arthur hadn't laughed, so as they four approached the throne, Gwenevere quietly said, "I've never seen that boy in my life before, King Arthur."

"You..." said Arthur, in challenge, as he approached the throne where the small boy was lounging, and looked at him funny. "You're in my throne, boy."

The boy raised an eyebrow at him, clicking his fingers across each other. "You broke my stone, wizard."

Arthur laughed and dropped Excalibur, like it was indestructible, and bounded up the stairs for the little boy to leap into his arms and hug him tight, just so, and Arthur hugged him and spun him around, up on the throne's dais, as happy as he could imagine being.

"Who in for world is this?" asked Gawain. "I dare say, did you hold out a son?"

"More and less, no," Arthur laughed, tussling the boy's hair, like he loved him well, standing there beside him. "I want you here, Merlin, for as long as you'll stay by my side."

Merlin wasn't not smiling, but he watched the four others, beneath the dais, when Lancelot said, "THIS is your friend Merlin? No namesake?"

"My own, if you want to know," said Merlin the boy.

"You said he was an old man!" he accused Arthur.

"Well enough I still do. He's the oldest man I know, still yet."

"For sure and less is more, I'd say! You asked her name, when the lady Gwen didst approach that stone, and said unto me that you wished to know that old woman, there."

Gwenevere flushed, and smiled, and Arthur wondered where she'd taken her dark complexion from. "You said..." she smiled at Arthur, like he was the sweetest boy in the world, and looked at Merlin, too. "So set, good wizard, you've broken ages for him and now he sees what he loves, for all."

"Well enough and good, I taught him nothing he did not already want to know, so I sped him along, well enough and more."

"This is the greatest moment of my life!" Arthur cried out. "Do you have any idea how happy I am to see all you here, for sure and now to be friends as all we'd never had not to be, but before so set we've secured our chance at peace and life for all those we'd have it for!"

"Last and for it not and least, fool boy king," said Gawain, "you should take that throne, before you..." he'd trailed off, and the others were silent, for a moment.

Arthur turned to Gwenevere, and met her eyes, "I meant what he said I meant, when I called you old; that I loved you on sight and could see your valour's glow, fair lady." And then he took his throne, and wondered at it, and looked at the other throne beside him, and frowned. "That's not right."

"Just so," said Merlin. "I'll have them both flogged, the chairs..."

"What in more forrit, sire? How do you feel?" asked Sir Lancelot, the bold and brave, what for.

"Well enough to let you know this throne is old and tired and done for." He rose from it, stretching like it was uncomfortable. "If I never had to move from a seat above all in the room, I do believe I'd have no life for which to be proud of."

"It is not a knight's throne, Arthur, but a king's," said Lancelot, sternly.

"More enough and less. You did not know I only needed one to sit high as I do, in this room. Sure enough and less, lady Gwenevere, would you try this throne, the larger of the two, and tell me yet which size you'd prefer for either, what for?"

She covered her mouth, in surprise, and Arthur didn't not smile, or wait, as she looked at him, in awe, and silently, lifted her dress above her ankles and climbed the stairs, to the dais above, and left her kiss, on Arthur's cheek, and whispered, "I do, lord king."

He smiled brighter, and watched her take the throne, like he'd asked, and she hummed, and hahed, and decided she'd try the other one, just to be sure. "Well enough and good, the king is right," she observed, after trying both thrones, like she was a coinsure. "These chairs are less for sure enough old and worn out fine."

"So set in more, when do you wed?" asked Gawain.

"Broken less you'd know about it," said Arthur. "I have less a mind to delay."

"Same for I would have, if you wouldst truly have my, Arthur," said his future queen.

"Then stand before me, said both of you," said Gawain. "Knights can marry, just so Arthur?"

"They can marry and be married to, so sure."

"More less you know a new oath?" asked Merlin of Sir Gawain.

"More or less I'll make one up, for never once did happiness fail me more than every hour before this moment and this day, you know." He looked like he actually might be crying, for some.

Arthur didn't want Gwenevere to leave him at all, but she was sure to let him get his bath and clothes for set, later on, and for then and there, in there, in the room of thrones, Gawain married them to one another, so set that she would be queen in the throne beside him.

"Dear lord husband," she said in low to him, after he'd kissed her, to seal his vows to hers. "Tell me what you want of this knightly table, so that I may gift one to you."

He smiled. "Nothing known is more, it would be round, and seat twenty five even, once and more again a twenty-sixth for fool's poisoned bane."

"Some set it for, what round table?" asked Merlin.

"The poison seat would be higher, than the others, and ostentatiously grand, too," said Gawain, to both Merlin and Gwenevere, the wizard boy and lady queen.

"More so less you mean to lure and kill?" asked Merlin. "What for in this is the table to be, exactly?"

"Set for, young wizard, harken old man again," said Lancelot, "we are the said knights of the round table, all among the other for reason as our rank, so set the knight king, Arthur Penndragon.

Merlin screamed and threw his arms around Arthur's shoulders, jumping just so high, hugging him dearly and Arthur didn't fall but back into the throne, happy enough to have the boy love him so much for that. He was grinning, broad, and looked back out at the others, for start. "Never once did I want to cry more than he told me what you were to him, both you and all, for the queen."

"You're quite mad, I think," said Gwenevere, "I like you well, wizard."

"So set more, queen." He turned back to Arthur, who was exhausted, still seated in his throne. "Poison seat?"

"Galahad's seat," said Gawain.

"Hells above," muttered Queen Gwenevere. "You terrify me."

"Not that I would not want to, but brave enough we'll stand to belittle his ego and destroy his reputation, henceforth. Would that I would leave him to his devices among my people, and yours, he will never be stopped, I think."

"The siege perilous," said Galahad's unmaker, the lord knight Lancelot, and more dangerous did he seem to look, when he said it, than ever before. "That was the name the seat had had, what for. It exists already, and I know where."

"What for?" asked Arthur.

"A time when one would need it. It's a gawdy old king's throne, and small enough not to be overdone at Round Table, far gone we'd call him king if he sat too high at supper."

"For to how, that..." Gwen trailed off, not understanding.

"He was chosen by God, my queen," said Lancelot. "A far greater man than either myself or my fellows would dare to be. The greatest knight who never lived..."

"So it begins to clear. A poison trap and here for sure, in this our house and home? Brave enough I'll stay for course, so long as my dear husband," she turned to Arthur, "can marry me to ten or twenty good friends, to sit between us two."

"Say forrit again?" asked Gawan.

"Did you forget who she was to me?" asked Arthur. "I whispered bits of my vow, and sure enough she'd never not have for her own seat at a table of knights."

"Well enough, you'd drive the other cur mad, and I do mean every other cur, what for," said Lancelot. "Well enough and good, fair queen of knights, I would love for your grace to be sat among the rest, for all."

Sure set for more in this, Arthur's life, but he was gone aft innit for, and this, a place broken back and down, by none, was here for what he was worth in this, and he knew sure and soon enough, he'd need to ride for Castle Fairbanks, with Lancelot and Gawain, sure yet still again, but he had less a mind to travel just yet, and sure, he'd not yet had the round table, obviously, or kept more less to anyone's company, he was often there to visit with Gawain or Lancelot or Gwenevere, sure often not, Merlin was at his side, sure, poking at him, helping him to think, or enjoy himself, sure simple enough, and he wanted for to be off, sure, every itching moment of his days, because he knew he had simply to delay too long, and... what?

She was there, certain, he knew, and sleeping, certain, he knew, so what made him think he was going to freak out and die if he delayed, sure as he knew he should, so that Lancelot and Gawain could fill the halls, to some extent, with a trusted guard.

He longed to try out his new sword, somewhere, but reasoned there were bandits enough still, on the way, but sure, in this, he spied the idea, that he could go for most any ways, and appear here and there on the balconies, and sure, many and more addresses he'd made, as thusly, to his people in the courtyard, and would have to do, to secure his establishment, here, in this place, before he left it to rescue his maiden sister, apparent be.

"Sure and life, I know not your colors, yet, but that this was Camelot, I would know you by. Do you hear me?!" he calls forth, down, in clarity. "I said for, I do not know *your* colors as of yet, but sure that I know we share them, yes? We share green, or white, or gold, or brown, or violet, sure in and red, too! All colors I can name, I know I've shared, and always had to, because they didn't belong to anyone."

And he left, them, there. There would be petitioners, sure, but he wasn't seeing any of those yet, and for addresses like this, he didn't want to leave too much to uncanny interpretation of wanting distractions in madness. If he wanted to talk about sharing colors like it was a main lesson course, he'd have to leave it at that for a few hours, and see what else happened about it.

Sure in his life as yet, Arthur Penndragon did not consider himself not a king, but, it was something similar to bedding a girl, for the first time, as his friend Kip had described it, in that, he'd been pretty sure he wasn't a virgin, before, but after, he thought, well no, I'm *definitely* not a virgin, now, but, I don't feel any different, really, at all.

Arthur, sure, wasn't feeling like an unsullied king, set forth when he'd arrived, but he hadn't done for sure yet less service than was warranted, to himself, and he reasoned he was good enough a person as not to be indulgent, sure enough, he was going to be torturing himself with creatures like Galahad showing up here, so sure, he was going to play and have fun as often as he wanted, he was quite sure.

Sure though, less still than that, he wanted to put Excalibur to a suit of armor, and watch it cleave through, sure, or, not, exactly, but there were plenty of suits of armor protecting evil, so, sure, he was sure on it. He'd written it, though. He was sure this was it, and Merlin hadn't not sat in on it with him for, countless hours, talking about the concepts they'd need, what journeys they'd take together, sure forth, what this was for and how that would be worded, and sure, he had this, a Code of Chivalry, set in forth, for himself and his knights, and Merlin had talked of his grandfather, while they'd written it together, and Arthur wondered when he might get to meet such a person as one this ancient card player would call grandfather.

He laid the code out before him scrawled as it was on finer parchment than he'd seen before in his life,

Code of Chivalry, as set down by King Arthur Penndragon, of the Knights of the Round Table, henceforth,... ..

Fairplay, as set forth in all our teachings, is as it never was before, and constitutes a level playing field, in the mind of the beholder of justice, and for to his level of understanding, he must administer what he believes to be fair. It vies for authority, unfair advantages can lead to disorder and unruly sentiment, and the attraction to positions of power for simply in and of the sake of themselves, so as to never wield such a station as to the cunning of battle, but as the merits in leadership expressed solely in the will and directive of a king all knowing and wise set for, and ever there was such a king, such would be an unruly day to find who could agree as to him and his leadership, henceforth, so as to ease settlement on the matter, kinship and friendship ceremonies are held in honor of fair play and knowing of different sports and valiant exercises... ..

Moreover thereon again, that this was never before known in all contempt, but that should one face an evil foe, no amount of cunning or trickery should be shed aside for in wielding any sword of truest justice, no such settlement could be reached in which Fair Play did not constitute discretion in outright murder and destruction of said evil doer, as ere reference in all codes of conduct henceforth, and that the truly noble are not born of ancient bloodlines, but of good and righteous spirits, in god, for love in happiness is their opinion, their rite of passage, and their way of love and romance to and fore in for adventure, thereon tu and without what constitutes a world they've worked for, one of Fair Play, for set in

once they were before, for no such idiot wouldst set believe that fair play could constitute commission of sins and oppression against all who oppose him, and indeed that he wouldst oppose all, most readily, he is in all his designs one such evil as who would snuff out love and happiness for all, and live bereft of any sense of fairness, thereonfor and hencewith.

So no nobler mind must exist in what they sent forth, lest we have but for not in what rights we yet as of have for tu and on in for, this one such Code of Chivalry, henceforth...

Nobility, as set forth by all church and dogma, is a credo indistinct from lunacy, and shall henceforth be banished from the minds of the noble born soldiers of justice and fortitude that have joined me here, at the Round Table, so forth... ..

Living life as a nobleborn citizen would be as one who knew nothing of the world of romance and adventure, only in a nightmarish world plagued by indecision and belittlement foreon thereon and without for further more that this life and further course of unforeseen action could level a playing field, so to speak, in all exercise of Fair Play, as so it was and without should not be, the Noble born heirs to power are those who never had to seek it out, but who were in themselves great noble houses of power, and so from them spread the ageless paradigm of a house and family, and descendants of higher learning and practice, henceforth... ..

Broaden your life to what you could set in me for, that this one life was all they'd lived beyond our understanding of friendship and romance, hereon and forthwith, and so you should never have and need know about whether this or that wouldst not be here, nor there again before, because nothing ever said or done without the love of those who would see you through in kinship all and fore, is no live for done without loving lasted here and on innit fore...

Set in life, for thee, to know that for Nobility to exist in any life, henceforth, and for all time past, he or she would know and love and live in throngs of ancient tombs of none for what they'd lived and breathed in all existences was life and prosperity, facing no end to hardship for it seeks them out, and yet, here they stand loyal to the throne, only in itself was it ever valued as a gathering point and pivot line for friends and family, fighting for Noble throngs and Noble values, truest on and throughout, and so is set for courage, once more...

Valor, for sure as you have seen it, cannot be attained by the wicked, and we know its taste and odor well enough in spirit, we, of noble birth and standing, set in forth above, so not in what the past churches and ancient families rot have declared themselves overt with it.

Bravery lust for passion and ecstasy and living there and on throughout eternal salvation for life and honor should be to know and see before again, that valor was rampant in our lives, and is as ancient as all philosophy, for et on lie is kung fu au lu, bravery and justice, set for sure in this and one, for all our people have set in forth just what we were and are, so never before again did it need be known that this was brave or that was cowards, when smelled the scent of valor, we have, and known that in all things they live and breathe, they are not cowards, but may act cowardly, in the face of evil, and for sure must be as they are in all things they see and know as valorly, so forrit, because as each with all it does exhibit a glow of tendency and set on for of begotten ages and times, it is not in close to one or more the same color or hue and seam in all different things, so we must know that in loving our sisters and brothers for all they are and will ever become, so more, they know that we can see Valor in them, too, and trust them for it, and innit, thereon again, into the last of our lives... ..

Honor begets the mind of courtesy, and loyalty, but does not recline from its sanctity in spirit and recognition, forever on and into the next for sure, it is used as an unstoppable weapon, for to those unbound by mirth or love for life, honor is a facsimile, and a bad one, too, and always is poorly copied, and so called honored, and we should laugh at this, for thenceforth to we who know honor in its truest intent, are unbarred by it, forever under, and they who seek to shield themselves innit, and bind you by it, are fools kept well in the prisons of the mind and body we have made for them, so sure... ..

As it stands to reason, there is little more and left I can teach you by it, but to know that in fair play and valor and reason and lack of power for power's sake alone for nothing innit but itself the motivation for what you live and breathe by, is your decree of honor, you know. Honor itself, coming from all things, well and good, so that this in life itself was never anything but a great and noble power that never itself had to stand against reason or time for on to know that we had never seen its liking before we came into it, set in more for love and happiness, that this in ever it was... ..

Courtesy, for wanton lack of better valor, should know that without valor and decency, however uncommon your realm innit has become, so sure that this in level lack of understanding, I should know well enough not to bore you with a common lack of courtesy, in the length of this diorama, in its inability to entertain, forthwith, on the hells of honor's troubling messages and valor's truest practice in kung fu au lu, so long as though before, you should know that to be mindful of different forms of valor, thou shouldst know that courtesy is what we lack when we bare our teeth and believe only ourselves to be fighting the good fights, in all due haste, and should we wish to see it around us, for in truth we bare, life could not so more wanton itself as to display no end of those who would do well to have been told they are respected,

what for... ..

This applies most necessarily and especially to women, what for, and to be sure enough that this could not be mistaken, I will grant you one forsaken truth in what courtesy could imply, more forth, in that women know well enough and good, in their valor, and their honor, that they can be and as are as they will be, so know in nothing that you could never know what strength would be accustomed to become, when well enough they have been so and forthely put by themselves upon the pedestals to be worshipped? Lacking for better knowing of it, we have never not wanted to crumble before a mother or a sister love, that this love and happiness we could not know is in their valor and strength and courage in all its forms, and so as to bestow an extra grant of courtesy to the ladies of noble birth or mind, set in for that life was always lived on in that should never forget to extend in different ways, and knowings forth, into the lives of children, and know that they could do well with your knowing of love and happiness, only granted that they not be treated as though cuteness were not a power they had honed finely, and wealth of laughter and smiles were not a power to be cherished and vied for, set for? That we would know courtesy is in your lack of understanding distinct details of another set forth in love and happiness, and so you know better to extend to them, the werewithall that they are cherished, and sought for, well enough in all the ways they are and will be, forever under and on...

Loyalty, as you know it well enough to warrant, is in the memory to ones own heart and lovings, for knowing that they could not ever know as you know, in the moment you know it, and so to show and stay true to what you are and know about them, in love, and set in for all you'd wanted to have in this, this life you'd lived and cherished well enough for forget the sentiment you'd longed for, and die by the blade of abandonment, when all others thought their work too important to belettle you with, henceforth, and you lay forgotten for timing did not match right, and your friends were not conveniently at your side, as before?

So in knowing all for the rest of this, you could never know what loyalty was unless you had it in you to forget the misunderstandings of kung fu au lu, of different walks of life in their quest for love and happiness ongoing, and forgive those whose walks of life differ so widely from your own, that even if to quarantine from one another, you must, you could know that in love, you both are fighting, so you know where all loyalties lie, should they surface again in your honor... .. Knowing not what you are, and never could have been, should tell the surface of the owner that he need never believe in himself less or more than the first one he had come in for. Knowing all things as you have seen them, and never before witnessed in life or cherishment, should you ever or once see that this was life as sought by the once great and powerful, and yet in chains of honor, we bind the wicked, for honor's bane they truly are, and chains of apathy bind the rest of us, for set in love and life, that this was all our doing, moreover that you have become one of the knights of the Round Table, and if your deeds be known by some few or far between, you are not unrecognized in what you seek for, for none have ever grasped the wealth of knowing just how fast your brand of happiness and love can spread and always does, but the oldest ones I've yet to witness depart this world for lack of children to play with, henceforth, and know and love forever more again...

He was sure it wasn't not finished, but he kept wanting to talk to Merlin, more, about this, and yet, here he was, playing it smart, while, Morgana was locked away, so, sure as this, he knew he couldn't leave, yet, and sure, she had clarified, that he should claim the throne, first, *then* rescue her, so, sure, he was sure this was somethingl like being chastened by and older sister, or something. he wasn't sure how she'd managed to get that sort of power over him already, considering their lack of a prior relationship as brother and sister, but hells in this, he was sure she had some choice way to belittle him for taking so foolishly long, and, sure, if she couldn't already know why he would stay, she wouldn't have to say so, and she could wait and watch him stammer his pathetic excuses for all the court to hear.

"Merlin!" he called over. "Do you know how impossible you are to argue with, in my mind, when you're not around?"

He'd just walked in, and looked, odd, different, sure for a start, different still. "Grandfather is coming to round table, Arthur."

He scooted back in his chair, sure, fast. "*Your* grandfather? Well sure, hell, bring him to court! I'd love for him to see this, our code, and sure to join in friendship hell and again back again of course, so what, is that expression for?"

He shook his head, as though, something were different about the whole universe, for a while. "I can't remember, what to tell you, about him, that serves as fair warning."

"Is he a small boy, like you?"

"Hm...? No, oh, no, he'll want to be a knight, with you and Gawain, said sure."

"He knows Gawain?"

Merlin shook his head. "He knows everybody, if he wants to. I think he and Gawain are old friends, though. Gawain wouldn't not know he was a freak of nature, but, he wouldn't know just how freaky, nor, do I, really."

"What in for, Merlin?"

"Sure though, he's... well he wants to be a knight of the round table, stupid. He thinks you're brilliant, and he'd never not want to be a part of it. He also said, 'don't not kill Galahad until I get there,' just for warrant, in the scry, just now.

"Well sure for, did we already invite him out?" Arthur was taking the picture, thusly.

"Well I wrote the invitations, stupid, you don't know who we've invited, and he'll have the best forged documents for

forever, sure, but, I'm pretty sure he doesn't even need like, three or four scrappy ones, just to throw you off."

"So I won't know him, then, as your grandfather, at all?"

"Not till he's here, no. He won't make a secret of his affection for me, though, so, you can tell yourself he's really my grandfather, and see how crazy that makes you sound to the others."

Arthur was sure Merlin was plenty more excited then he was letting on, just then, so, he sat, quiet, for a moment, and played with the font scribed on the document before him a little, filling in little gaps in the colored strokes, upon it.

"He's going to bring a retinue, so, we can trust the castle, once he's here, if you want to go to Castle Fairbanks, by then," he said to Arthur.

"Sure hell," Arthur looked at him. "That's the best news you could have given me, past, Galahad's already been obliterated."

"Well he'll get there eventually, Arthur, he was chosen by god, after all."

This life in sure that he'd lived, Arthur was sure he had something less intelligent to say to Merlin than that he loved him, if he wanted for to say it, but he didn't have to, so he said he loved him, and as so, accompanied him out of the bedchamber, here with the Code of Chivalry in his hand, wanting to show the other knights at court the completed manuscript.

"Oh it's not a secret, now, is it? Our codes?" Lancelot asks him, sure for, current present here, at this table, they drink and mead at.

"Sure, not yours, any longer. It says here you even like women, Lancelot."

"I *what?*" he glanced it over. "Oh, no, that.... that's right. You've got it here as, 'really, really, really likes women,' so, well done, Arthur, that's my code, alright."

"Sure it's my grandfather's code, too," said Merlin, little boy that he appears to be, at Arthur's side.

"Your..." Gawain looked sure of nothing, sure yet still enough, "your grandfather's?"

"Well enough, who's he?" asked Kay, sure, skating past, looking at the document, sure, a bit, but he couldn't read well, but, he looked back up, and took his hand off the paper he'd witnessed.

"No one you know," said Merlin, like, he didn't detest, or belittle, or mock him, and sure enough, this was not the same Merlin that Arthur's foster brother Sir Kay had ever witnessed before arriving here to become a knight and reclaim Arthur's sword in the stone, but, it was strange to witness, as Merlin had changed his countenance so completely, Kay seemed to forget that he ever really was an old man, the whole time he was growing up with Arthur, back home, so sure, he treated Merlin like a privileged brat, oftentimes, and Merlin was an extremely powerful and ancient wizard, when he wanted to be one, so, one might imagine just how much hyjinx Kay's life seemed mockable in.

"Who are you? you should have asked her," Merlin was saying to Lancelot, as he related the story of seeing Lady Morgana's spectre, in the enchanted wood, that night so many ages ago, it felt like, now, but fresh still. "Who are you?! Who sent you?! How old are you?! Where do you come from?! You ask them one after the other, like that, and it gets you far, much farther than a lot of other stammerings will, with just about anything that wants to talk to you, or manipulate you, so, good play, still yet."

"Those are ancient wonderings," said Gawain, sure it was true, and he took some dipped bread and scrunched it up before eating it, "sure though," he said when he'd swallowed, they were all in thought, "I want you to know something about those questions, Arthur. Lancelot. Mostly Merlin, you impressionable git."

Merlin grinned like he was happy, or whatever. "Mostly," said Gawain in continu, "that you can't ever need them to answer more than one, sure taken, and sure, if they want to rearrange your face a little, for asking too slow, that'll happen too."

"Basically expect whatever," said Merlin, "you should really mean to want to learn, by the time you ask those questions. And, don't not shout them, too, most often, I think."

Arthur wanted to know more, about the sorts of ceatures Gawain and Merlin had encountered, with those questions, at the ready. He was sure, too, that this sort of life he was in, was going to be all too fought with peril, when he hadn't had some, sure soon, so he wondered at the common wonders of the world, and decided he was better off for changing his life and livelihood often, and without reservation.

Sure in spirit, Arthur would not be fighting in the coming tournament, in celebration for the joining of these new set squires, set to be learned of and knighted by any or all seated already, in character at the round table still not yet delivered, hence.

Sure it would be, by tomorrow, still yet, and it was going gone, for sure in less, that Lancelot *would* be competing in the ceremony, so sure in this, that Arthur was that he was king, and would be known as such, and that when he and Lancelot left, sure, he reasoned, he wasn't *not* going to take Lancelot with him on this journey to Castle Fairbanks, sure soon coming, but sure soon, too, he had this tournament to wonder at, and the new lords and lords' sons coming to squire with him, soon here, too.

"Believe in what you're building Arthur," said Merlin, coming up behind him on this terrace for addresses, set yet, there were few gathered still here, and hadn't taken to witnessing the king unless he spoke, as he came out here often, to watch. "It's all you're dreaming of, and more. You have this place, and surely, that means its people, so sure soon yet, you do not have enough of them, so here we wait, and sure we are, that we must."

CHAPTER 16

The way he was, today, Arthur couldn't quite believe he still had to receive these layabouts, sure enough, he laughed to himself, because yet in still, they were not to be squired,, till Lancelot had had his way about them, in the tournament, henceforth.

Sure and still of it and yet, Lancelot was not here, watching these men come on, one or short less for two, it was boring, sure some, to not be king or night in question, so sure forth, Lancelot could look like king quite readily, here forth, Arthur was more a boy again still, an ancient teenager, sure, but here in his life, he wanted for less in more, a different way about him, so sure and forth, he believed himself to be, of a different nature, this morning, and sure, he'd felt like Gwenevere was really his girlfriend, sure, and it meant more to the worlds over to him, to have her there, with him, now, sure, and she was fun, for what in she said to him and Merlin, who was chaste, to be sure, "I don't like the feel of these ones, sire King." "In, what?"

"Lord Henceworthy's son, Young Lionel card, at player hence and forth, here for living, sure forth again, in this!"

"Oh, piss," Arthur murmured, and Gwenevere chuckled. "Sure, alright," she said for tu him. "You're kingly about it, to be sure."

"I don't like the look of him either, Gwen," he said for sure, surly. "I do believe I'll knight this one, queer objective that he is, or seems to be."

"Can you tell?" asked Merlin, hence and forth. "I never can get it on right, with the immaculates. They're always so clean, I can't really get a read on them."

Gwen wanted very much to kiss him for that, just then. She looked less unto this Lionel card, sure player, what having, until he was dearer to the steep staired dais, sure in this a change in scenery courtesy of Merlin's shifting ways. He'd pranced up the stairs fourteen formillion times, apparent be, with Arthur sure bringing up in after him, and Lancelot, for a spell, sturdy knight that he was, and she laughed, sure, but then nearly frowned, at this, the sight of Lionel's unruly faggotry.

Queens get to be offensive in the slightest, yes? "Sure for, faggot!" she called down to him. "What in blazes for do you bring your chicanery to my husband's court?"

Arthur was unreadable, Merlin, too, sure, but, looked more like, whoa, is, Mom telling him he's not allowed to be a whore? I didn't know, we *had*, to tell them that. Strange, to be a little boy at court here like this, no?

"Merlin how old are you?" she asked him leaning fore over her husband's lap in his throne, sure set equal seated, and forth she leaned to speak to Merlin before in any a regard came from Lionel's faire entandra.

"Seventy six, fourth of july, next saturday may,"

She smiled, short sigh of a laugh, "alright, but, what, do you tell the school teacher when you go and play around there?" she was making him wait, it was obvious, and funny, too, because she wanted to know, honestly.

"How do *you* know I play in the schools?" earnest forrit, 7, or 6?

"Lady Q..." he stopped himself, at Arthur's countenance, sure, and Gwen looked still at Merlin, and said, "Sure enough, I've guessed it. Why else would you be smart for all you're worth? What do you tell them?"

"Well, 6 or 7, mostly."

She smiled, like, I knew you'd say that only *after* I thought it. Card. Player. Sure, now she took herself back from Merlin, over the throne, kissed Arthur's cheek on her way past him, and regarded this, the Lionel card, set for, what, are, you?

"Your Lordship," oh, set for, the interlude,

"King, cur!" ordered Merlin, still ever for, the little boy, but bold and just, in his proclomation.

"Your Majesties," said the clerk, whoever for, this was, and he was the one who'd spoken first, here, anyhow.

"Sure, what for?" the queen asked. "I directed the inquiry as to your insatiable need to... oh, forrit, mind it not at all, what are you, card, or player, Young Lionel?"

He bowed some. "Majesty Queen, well, set in for, I, I know not what to say beyond, it is, easy well to come to this fair palace, hence, and,.. and to bask sure thusly in the coming age of this, your, two, wonderful monarch leaderships..."

Hastily worded and, stupid, forth, sure. "What forth, Lionel?" asked King Arthur, young, the teen, still. "What are you?"

The king speaks, by now, and all ears listen. "In this, your Majesty, I am,.. well a squire to be tried, sure, I wish to be a knight at your table, sure and hence. May I to try my hand at thine tournament, this even?"

Merlin whispered over, "he's a nitwit," like it was a technical designation.

"In that, yes," said Arthur Penndragon, "I know less or more what you are in appearance, but do you know what your dress implies?"

"No, sure, what, Majesty? That I am... eh, foreign, do you?"

"He's lying, Master," said Merlin. What, ? Arthur looked at his page, set for, and mage, set for, the wizard who'd raised him, set for, lying?? Alright, sure, Merlin, he's... lying... "He says you're lying, Lionel," said Arthur Penndragon.

"Lying, sire?"

"I know not what he means, sure enough," said Arthur, to Lionel, below, "but this is what I see of you. You do not think I

should have a wife, but, you like that I have a boy. Is this, what, maybe, you think I could have seen?"

He was, broken stone cold in silence, sure, and in pain, unwanting, and this, Arthur nor Gwenevere offered any relief, for some time.

"I do not, know for what to say. I can, change my dress, if-"

"Do not ignore the affront," said Arthur. "What, are you, by definition? If you spend all your time, in merry making with your friends, I see no quarrel with you for it, but in less, that if this was your calling, then, why, does your dress, state thus, so in much offense?"

"I dress as this," he dropped the bow of his head, "I dress as this, but for so that, I may, seek of my friends, differently, is all."

"No," said Arthur, "you looks as though you seekest the same, in all sexual intercourses. Always the same. This is your curse, missionary. My wife named you faggot, I will name you missionary. Begone, from this court; you offend me, with your presence."

He did not leave for ought in question, as to whether a change in courses would be due, to Lionel's joining the round table, but a mere change of outfits would hardly do, if he was to be spent here for any time at Arthur's palace, at all, really.

Gwenevere hadn't needed to discuss such politiks with Arthur, her husband, as ought before, but, she'd seen him well enough with Gawain and Lancelot and Merlin to know he scorned no affection from other boys, so sure fore in, he loved her more much and well, and sure was oft haunted by the aspect of delaying so long in his rescue of his maiden sister, the enchantress, Lady Morgana au seire, de au nor, de valu, dar lun an in tuiet alu. More un seiya, mur un uielatt tett imat eteyou, sour ereiya eyye. "Is your rescue of your maiden sister going to take long, Arthur, do you think?" He looked at her as though she were, sure what, even still, what? "I have no idea."

"So forth, acceptable knowledge, I suppose. Who, forth?!" she called down over to the clerk by the door, what for, the receiving butler.

"Yes, your highness!" he called over. "Here am announcing a," he checked, back, sure, a moment, "Elyan, the White!"

"Oh, fuck," said Merlin.

"What?" asked Arthur. "Speak it, boy, what of? Who is Elyan, what is white about him? Merlin?"

"Sure forrit, boy works fine, you know, too, Master," said Merlin, watching there, the approaching man in white robes, sure, and a mage staff, too, and Merlin just, "that's a habit though I'm trying to pick up, Master business, it works wonders on travels, I assure you."

"Alright, then I fault you not, Merlin. Boy, whom, I love well, so, remember boy means that, whenever I say it, alright?"

"Sure for, it'll work sure on this one."

"Your Majesties!" bows the man with thin white hair, but long enough indeed, with this and his gnarled oaken brown wood staff, and sure, a splendid white cape and gown and, sort, robe, fixture.

He was alone not, set for, in eight attendants, well groomed, but sure in foreign dress to his own, well enough. Arthur was not sure to make of what he looked like, but didn't bare reason to insult him on his own, so sure, was that what, queens could get away with more openly?

"Well met, Elyan, the White. From what order, may I ask, is of you are?"

"The White in the order of magi," he suggested upright, handling his staff, thusly. "Surely, your mentor, Merlin, taught you of it."

"White's a color, not an order of magic, jester!" calls Merlin, so in set, a young and ignorant boy, at apparante.

"What in blazes? Set yourself back, boy! Believe it, though! This place in which to what I am, was *never* gone on to before!"

Merlin had fire rage up in his eyes, for this one, and Arthur knew for a space in moments, he wanted so bad, to rip him apart with words of power, there and then, in this, but before he spaced another breath, Gwenevere responded to the magi's scolding of the page present.

"Who in hell to taken for, sure in brought to ages whispered gone on died and dead for in this fair and romance chapters gone on for in death to wanting this, in knowing less and going forth, sure in this and taken back before, sure, not in that, or this before?!"

He looked, taken, sure, what, leaning on his staff, in this, alright... "Though left it was that I am, Majesty Queen, you are of new in different make, I think I've seen. Of what color might you be graced in?"

"She's wearing pink, stupid!" said Merlin. She was, not, wearing pink, but light blue, but, Merlin wasn't sure what this man thought colors were for, anyway.

Merlin had, not been chastened by the words put forth to him already, and this surprised the old magi, Elyan the White, and he looked hard, at the boy. "What in for to be that you are, boy? What in colors do you look for, eire nay again, today?"

"If I may, Elyan," said Queen Gwenevere, "yes, your Majesty..?"

She straightened in her throne,. "What in measure, do your colored orders mean? Assume alien, still, in this, our knowings."

"My mentor would speak to you as ignorantly as this boy would," Arthur gestured, "for in what you are, if culture's knowing, is all you speak of. Worry not for being quizzed, either, on what you say, just, don't... lie, to me. I'm your king, you see."

"Ah, yes, well in that, there is the Gray, the Blue, the Yellow, the Red, the Brown, the Green,"

"More colors?!" Merlin demanded. "Set *what?! Get over yourself, old man! You're color blind, and I know it!*" he accused with a point at him, out straight and adorable simple.

Arthur didn't decide what to do about Elyan right then, but, the old man was so slow to say anything relevant, Arthur was sure this must have been his gift in magic, sure.

That was, sure enough a decent wit to be trifled with, and Merlin didn't think to do anything but mock him at every turn like the sure squire of the knightly king, or something else with too much say so and know how to say so when so. After Elyan the White was dismissed, Arthur saw three or, three, he remembered, four other people, who came through, sure enough, and the names he couldn't recall for then a moment after, and, he wondered what in for his mind was doing, just then.

Sure so set in miles for broken sure in this for set in broken hours for wanting this in taking over hours for more in wanting sure in taking hours in wanting sure for staking hurled away, gone for sure in taking hours for sure in this was gone away, sure in this for hours gone for sure in this our sacred song in thyme with life in thyme with pain set living pleasure's gone sure pain in this life set for once in sureness this life sure in breaking bread with these our merry brothers sure in sisters' company I'm sure to know and this and want for less in sure in this our merry jest and song! about this world we know, sure in this, heire we go, sure so living back for less and broken blacktops saking bleeding horses carried sure far away sure back and sure away back away...

Arthur couldn't hear all the words, of course, there, together, out on the terrace courtyard, but, some troupe was singing, and, he could hardly fore tu pay any attention until he could find out who it was, and from whence they'd come.

"Sire, to be announced?" called the butler in waiting. Night was falling, sure enough. The tournament would begin at even dusk, sure soon. Arthur made his way towards the throne, sure, somewhat, but stayed forhere, the window, to look out at the couryard. The room, this throne room, was smaller, now, sure set in for Merlin's magic, and it was a quick strafe to the staired throne dais. "Yes," he signaled to his servant, who aquiesced, hence and fore, "Robin of Locksley, your Majesty,"

On sure fellow, sure about Arthur's age exactly, but, surer never had to leave the forest, Arthur was pretty sure. What, in, for? He was, dressed like, a, he'd run, sure as he'd come in, straight to Merlin, who was leaping up halfway across the floor into Robin's arms, who picked him up and tore him loose from the ground in doing it, laughed, and smiled, hugged him, placing him down, and sure, breathed in his hair as he held his head to his chest, running his fingers through the boy's hair, and holding him close, sure, having missed him well.

It was for in a breath of a few moments, sure it felt like, before he turned to face Arthur, and smiled at him, then bowed at his waist, sure, a well practiced bow of foreplay, he had forrit. "So suited, King of Camelot."

Arthur looked at him like he were a stranger, and barked, "Who are you?! Who sent you?! How old are you?! What, is your favorite color?!"

Robin laughed, like, holding his thighs above his knees could keep him okay, for a moment, and he was sure quiet, but laughing so much well for mirth it was well and good the best of measures, for him.

"You look well, for an old man," said Robin.

"Would be that I could trade places with you, so forth for one hour, some legend for the."

Robin turned to Merlin. "Can we do that?"

"What? Sure," said Merlin, "that'd be easy."

"Morgana!" Arthur realized. "You... you could stand in?! At the tournament?"

Robin nodded. "Sure for, I can, Arthur. I will, in fact, if you want t-" he turned and looked toward the butler, sure yet, signaling that he was going to take his shirt off, here on this side, to Arthur, without the servant seeing his intent. Arthur dismissed the servant, sure, and the guards, and switched clothes, quickly, with Robin, lie he said, "oh, and, you're a knight, congratulations."

"Uh," Robin had taken up Excalibur, from sure, it was still in Arthur's belt, which he wore, now, "I'm a king, so you see."

Arthur smiled, and took the sword at the pommel when Robin righted it and handed it to him, then he took for sure in less, the scabbard for it.

"Look at me, though," said Robin, and, he sang,

Sure for once in twice our move for this in gone on innit for sure so it lies in this our cause without the rest for sure in life, sure so sure this life was gone on for, sure this life wasn't bad, before, sure, this life I've taken over sure was never wrong before, but sure, yours wasn't half so bad, sure this life was gone, sure, this wasn't yours, yours isn't mine but this is what we say in this for sure this life was gone on back for sure in shelter, this once sure this life, sure broken, sure this life was gone for shelter this was gone on sure in this more gone on ageless this in timing this, taken back, sure in back, sure in back, this life, this life, this timing, here, now, sure, this now, sure this, now, this life, here before, so sure, this life before, sure so here, before, so sure, herein, before, so sure, this life, before, so sure, this life, gone back, so sure in life that

living back in simplicity, with yourself, sure this and a kingly sword to bare, sure is yours, take it sure in this, break not what you are, sure this life is gone.

sure I name you knight, I say, I'm king you know and boy you are to me and say for this I know I'd trade with you if ever once a chance we had, so sure in this, that life was gone for this in less that I couldst never have for more in this our own prince pauper score so sure this life was gone so back and life was gone so sure in black to rot and taken sure in this a princely gift in this our rite sure gone on back and forth sure in,"

the spell, formed, sure, shaped, in its measure, and Arthur looked gone away for, in a mirror, and Merlin was working the magic, he could see, in the boy's eyes, and he thought, perhaps, he was tailoring or finewielding what magic Robin laid out in the song, there forth, meeting Arthur's eyes, all the while.

"sure in this not jested about or balked at but this life wasn't gone so sure, you couldn't never have to know, a pauper sure in this I have a role as prince, sure so no your life is not a pauper role in sure you know, for what's to do, as what a boy can be, sure, so see me? Not gone in for, sure I could be, you, sure you, sure you, a boy still, a boy still, I'm a princely boy still, but still a boy still, sure a boy still, sure a boy still, so... sure, what, in, this? What, sure, this, is? This, wasn't, bad, before? Sure, so bad, before? This once in, this, once, sure once, overtaking this in journeys back and hence, sure in back this life we're living here, this in living, this, once, sure, this time, gone, back in this life, sure in this was gone so sure in this life was gone for tu and more this was never knowing sure less than ours wasn't here, sure in this life too, for us, sure here and now, but this life, wasn't gone, back on for, so leave this leaving back, sure so take this life sure in my own, but here we know, and I wouldst know, that this was gone, sure set for less in life, living back in sure a pauper's paradise your life wasn't in this a princely mold back before, I said, sure no this place wasn't for a knight, sure a knight you secret so, can be, sure, not to me though, sure this was gone on for sure, this time, here, this time," a mirror shifted less than this image, but felt far less familiar, as he watched this, and more wanting knowing more, what this course in magic truly was, but so forth here, to have it happen, this, this changeling song, sure, sung by this errant lord, gone off from Locksley, and aided and abetted by Merlin, hence.

"sure for mark! this once sure! this time last in this once sure this life sure back again, sure this life again this life wasn't back before so sure this time, wasn't back, sure this, life wasn't, back before, so sure, this life, wasn't, here, so, sure, back, here, sure, this wasn't, bad!, but, bad!, but, sure so never left us here back intuit this, more, a cause! back, a cause! Sure, so set, this life, back before so sure in this sure once in this life sure gone on back by in it for, sure so set this life, back before, so sure, this once, back before, so sure, this once, sure so set this once, sure, believe, this life, here, the same, not once but twice but ever more forever more under this more that once here before so sure this life here back before again before life living back before in this life again before so back before again this life before again this life before again this life before again so sure this life wasn't back before, sure this life this wasn't sure this life this life wasn't sure this life, wasn't, sure this life, sure this, this wasn't, this wasn't, this, this, this, this, this, this, wasn't bad at all sure back before, in this before, so sure before, sure in this,"

Arthur wasn't sure, when, exactly, he'd picked up the measure, and started singing along with Robin, here, but he did, and sure, it was easy, and strange, sure, and he was higher sure than he'd felt in anything, sure less, nothing existed to compare it to, because this was this, and he said this, that, there, before, so sure, this life, before, this life, before that once, before, so sure, that once in this before, so sure, that life...

Arthur hurried, ran, sure off, with Merlin at his side, and out to collect Lancelot, and Gawain, down by the tournament grounds, for sure in a quick start, they wanted to be making.

He had it, though. This throne, and kingdom. He was set faire, married, and wanting not for a magic sword, he wore still at his hip, here, and motioned to move it to his back, for when they traveled, this time, and wanted sure a better chance to believe he could be different, from any other king who lived, and sure he knew, if all they'd ever been after, was to stay the course, they'd have been mad, and idiots, or, puppets, easily enough, and less so, they'd have to have been evil for countless ages, to build a place this broken and sure in torture sure for less in this and countless other ages, gone off on for too, in more.

This life he was gathering about him, sure was less or more a decent spectacle to behold, sure in this, but, he had for wanting in this, with his friends waiting at sure, their mark, with the horses set. It would be them four, set out for to rescue Morgana.

modern act,

have you heard of the seam in the stone?